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Minnesota Department of Health

News Release

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Contact information

Revised fish consumption advice issued for bluegill sunfish in Pool 2 of the Mississippi River

PFOS measured in fish tissue poses health concern if eaten too often, state health officials say

The Minnesota Department of Health is revising the Fish Consumption Advisory to include guidelines on eating fish from Pool 2 of the Mississippi River that may contain PFOS, a perfluorochemical (PFC). PFOS has been measured in the edible tissues of bluegill sunfish and smallmouth bass at levels of health concern for people who eat these fish too often. Pool 2 refers to the section of the Mississippi River between the Hastings Dam and the Ford Dam in St. Paul, including some backwater lakes and connecting channels.

MDH recommends that people who eat bluegill sunfish from Pool 2 of the Mississippi River limit their consumption to one meal a week. Previously the consumption recommendation for bluegill sunfish was "unlimited." The Department of Natural Resources has Special Regulations requiring that smallmouth bass be immediately released after being caught from Pool 2. As this regulation should prevent people from eating smallmouth bass, MDH is only revising the bluegill sunfish advice. Although channel catfish fillets and white bass also had low levels of PFCs, following the existing fish consumption advice based on mercury and/or polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) will also protect people from exposures to PFCs.

MDH developed the revised advice based on scientific information about the toxicity of PFOS. Laboratory research indicates that PFOS causes harmful changes in the livers of some animals. Like mercury, PFOS binds to proteins throughout the fish rather than concentrating in fat. Special cleaning and cooking precautions used to reduce contaminants like PCBs that concentrate in fat are not effective with PFOS.

At this time, there is no information about levels of PFOS in fish from areas of the Mississippi other than Pool 2. Over the next several months more sampling data from Pool 2 and other areas is expected. These data were gathered as part of an investigation of PFC releases from the 3M Cottage Grove facility.

The toxicity of PFCs is the subject of active research. MDH continually reviews ongoing research on PFOS and other perfluorochemicals to ensure that Minnesota's health guidelines for contaminants in fish and water remain protective of people's health. As new studies and science become available, the guidelines may be revised to reflect additional information.

"With the fishing season coming up, this is a good time for all of us to remember that fish are good to eat," says Pat McCann, "but we should make wise choices about which fish we eat and

how often." People are advised to check out the statewide Safe Eating Guidelines or site-specific advice for the Mississippi River.

Health experts, including MDH, recommend eating one to two meals of fish per week. Fish are a good low-fat source of protein and contain many vitamins and minerals. Eating fish may help protect adults against cardiovascular disease. Pregnant women and women who may become pregnant should also eat fish because eating fish promotes eye and brain development in fetuses.

More information on the Minnesota Fish Consumption Advisory may be found on the MDH Web site. Updated site-specific advice for the 2006 fishing season will be available online by the state walleye opener in May.

PFCs are a group of manmade chemicals that have been used for decades to make products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease and water. See Perfluorochemicals and Health for more information.

-MDH-

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