

Badin Lake Frequently Asked Questions

Is it safe to eat fish from Badin Lake?

In general, it is safe to eat most fish from this lake except for catfish and largemouth bass, which contain elevated levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and mercury.

Women who are pregnant, nursing, or of child-bearing age (15-44), and children under 15 should not eat any largemouth bass or catfish caught from Badin Lake. All other persons should not eat more than 1 meal per week of these fish.

The PCB advisory applies only to Badin Lake. The **mercury consumption advisory** for largemouth bass is a statewide advisory and affects all waterways in the state. The catfish advisory is for areas of NC south and east of Highway I-85.

Is it safe to handle contaminated fish?

Yes. It is safe to pick up, clean and handle all of these fish.

Is it safe to swim in this lake?

Yes. It is also safe to boat, wade, swim and do other activities in the water. Skin contact with the water or sediment does not represent a health risk.

What are the symptoms of PCB poisoning?

Consuming large concentrations of this chemical over a long period of time can cause health problems. Some negative health effects may include damage to the liver, stomach, thyroid gland, immune system and reproductive system. PCBs are a possible carcinogen. If you worry that you might be sick as a result of PCBs consumption, contact your family physician or OEEB/ NCDPH at 919-707-5900.

How can mercury affect my health?

- High levels of mercury can cause serious damage to the brain, nervous system and kidneys.
- Children under 15 and developing fetuses are at greatest risk from the harmful effects of mercury.

Why were the fish analyzed for PCBs at Badin Lake?

Previous environmental investigations indicated the presence of elevated quantities of two contaminants, PCBs and polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), in the lake sediment. No PAHs were found in the fish.

Stanly County Officials asked the N.C. Division of Public Health's Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch to:

- Review existing Badin Lake environmental data to determine if consuming fish from Badin Lake represented a health risk to the public;
- Identify what additional studies were needed to determine if people could be affected by eating the fish from Badin Lake; and
- Make recommendations to protect the health of the public.

Will additional fish from this lake be tested? What about other lakes? Why?

The N.C. Division of Public Health is not planning to do any additional testing. Additional testing would be considered if evidence of a potential health risk comes to our attention. The current data available does not suggest an additional health risk in other waters.

Will you be testing the fish in other lakes in North Carolina?

The Division of Public Health does not conduct routine testing of lakes. This type of investigation is very expensive. We conduct testing, with the help of other state agencies, when there is evidence of a potential health risk.

What is the source of the contamination at Badin Lake? Where are PCBs coming from?

This investigation was designed to determine if a fish advisory was needed for Badin Lake. This investigation is not designed to determine where the contamination is coming from. The type of study needed to identify the source is not the type of evaluation that North Carolina Division of Public Health performs.

Is there a way to know the source of the contamination at Badin Lake?

That is a question that can only be answered by environmental contamination experts. The North Carolina Division of Public Health is not qualified to answer those questions.

What is the N.C. DPH qualified to answer?

We can answer questions about potential or existing health risks to people from environmental contamination, but we cannot identify the source of the contamination. Our focus is the study of risks to human health.

Will other studies be conducted to determine the source of the contamination at this lake?

The type of study needed to identify the source is not the type of evaluation that North Carolina Division of Public Health performs.