



News Release

Arkansas Department of Health

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For Immediate Release

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Fish Consumption Advisory Issued for Lake Ouachita

(Little Rock) – The Arkansas Department of Health is issuing a fish consumption advisory for Lake Ouachita. This advisory comes after fish from Lake Ouachita, collected by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and tested by the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, were found to contain levels of mercury that have the potential to put human health at risk. There are currently 20 bodies of water that are under a mercury in fish advisory in Arkansas. Nationally, all 50 states have fish consumption advisories due to mercury.

This advisory is a notice about the mercury levels present in fish and the possible health effects on those who regularly eat fish from the lake. This advisory only applies to those eating fish from Lake Ouachita and does not affect swimmers, skiers, boaters, catch and release activities, or other recreational uses of Lake Ouachita. This advisory does not limit the use of Lake Ouachita as a drinking water source.

Occasional fish consumers, such as vacationers and sport anglers, are at little risk for adverse health effects associated with mercury because their overall fish consumption is generally low and may come from many different locations. Those most at risk include sensitive populations, such as pregnant woman and small children, and people who frequently eat larger fish, such as bass, from Lake Ouachita.

The fish consumption advisory is as follows:

High Risk Groups (women of childbearing age, pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and children under the age of seven years):

Should not eat largemouth bass (13 inches or longer), white bass (13 inches or longer), or striped bass (25 inches or longer) from this lake.

General Public (men, women, and children seven years and older):

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Lake Ouachita Fish Consumption Advisory

Eat no more than 2 meals per month of largemouth bass (13 inches or longer), white bass (13 inches or longer), or striped bass (25 inches or longer) from this lake.

Eating fish with mercury will not make people sick right away, but as you eat more and more, it can build up in the body and, over time, potentially cause adverse health effects.

The Arkansas Department of Health issues fish consumption advisories when enough data indicates elevated levels of mercury have been reached.

Fish is an important, low-fat source of protein. Knowing and following the fish consumption advisories allows you to safely keep fish as an important part of your diet.

For more information about fish consumption advisories in Arkansas, visit www.healthy.arkansas.gov and type 'mercury' in the Smart Search box located on the left hand side of the page. You may also visit www.agfc.com/mercury .

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