

Questions and Answers

Can I safely eat fish caught in Little Lake, the Otonabee River and Rice Lake?

The Ontario Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources bi-annually publishes the *Guide to Eating Ontario Sport Fish*. The *Guide* provides recommendations on the number of meals per month that may be safely consumed, given the fish species, length, and body of water from which it was caught. Separate recommendations are made for the general population, women of child-bearing age, and children less than 15 years of age. Chemical contaminants are identified in each case. The guide can be found at www.ontario.ca/fishguide.

Little Lake, the Otonabee River downstream of Little Lake, and Rice Lake have the most restrictive fish consumption recommendations in the Guide for lakes in Peterborough County. The recommendations for other lakes in Peterborough County generally allow for more meals per month and for more meals of larger fish sizes.

For example, for fish caught in Little Lake, it is recommended that no more than eight meals of walleye up to 20cm in length be consumed per month. In the case of a walleye from 55 to 65cm, it is recommended that the general population not consume more than two meals per month and women of child-bearing age and children not eat any walleye of that size. Larger fish have had the opportunity to accumulate more contaminants by feeding upon many smaller fish species over a longer period of time.

In the case of carp caught in Rice Lake, the *Guide* recommends that the general population not consume more than two meals per month of carp from 35 to 45cm in length, one meal from 45 to 60 cm and none from those greater than 75cm. Women of child bearing age and children should not eat any carp of that size. Carp are bottom dwelling fish and are therefore exposed to more contaminants in the lake bottom sediment.

The *Guide* states that no PAHs or metals other than mercury were found in any fish species of any length in Little Lake. Contaminants that were found in fish from Little Lake include chlorinated phenols, chlorinated benzenes, mercury, PCBs, mirex/photomirex and pesticides. It is the amount of these chemicals that form the basis for the recommendations in the *Guide* with respect to the number of meals that may be safely consumed.

Can I safely drink water from Little Lake and Otonabee River?

No one should drink water directly from any body of surface water without proper treatment and testing. The greatest risk from drinking surface water is illness from bacteria, viruses and parasites. Boiling the water or using an appropriate water treatment system kills or inactivates these biological contaminants. A homeowner drawing water directly from the Otonabee River is responsible for ensuring that their water is safe. Microbiological testing of treated surface water is available free of charge from the Public Health Lab. Chemical testing can be arranged from a private lab for a fee.

City of Peterborough residents obtain their drinking water from the Peterborough Water Treatment Plant located on Water Street between Trent University and Little Lake. The Peterborough Water Treatment Plant is subject to strict provincial regulation including Safe Drinking Water Act and the Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standards (ODWQS). These regulations stipulate which tests for chemicals must be done, how frequently the tests must be repeated, and the procedures which must be

followed in the event that a standard is not met. The ODWQS include PCBs and metals. In the event that one of these chemicals exceeds levels prescribed by the ODWQS, the Ministry of the Environment and the Health Unit must be contacted. To date, the Peterborough Water Treatment plant has not recorded any exceedences in PCBs or metals.