Advice for people who catch and eat fish from this waterway

Slightly elevated levels of mercury have been found in fish from the Loddon River between Laanecoorie and Bridgewater, including in redfin, Murray cod, golden perch and common carp.

These fish should be eaten in accordance with advice provided in this fact sheet. Redfin, Murray cod and common carp should be eaten no more than once per fortnight for pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and young children (less than six years old), and no more than once per week for the general population. No other fish should be eaten in that period.

Golden perch should be eaten no more than once per week for pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and young children (less than six years old), with no other fish eaten during that week. The general population can eat up to three serves of golden perch per week.

Mercury in fish

Fish are high in protein and other essential nutrients, low in saturated fat and contain omega-3 fatty acids. Everyone is encouraged to eat two to three serves of fish per week as part of a healthy diet.

People take in small amounts of mercury in their diet from eating fish. In most fish, the levels are very low however some varieties contain high levels of mercury due to their feeding habits or surrounding environment.

Commercially sold fish that may contain high levels of mercury include shark (flake), swordfish, orange roughy and bluefin tuna.

In freshwater environments containing mercury, some species of fish may contain high levels of mercury. This is more likely in fish that are predatory (eat other fish) and also live a long time in this environment.

Where is mercury found?

Mercury occurs naturally and in very low levels in rocks and soils. It may also occur in some soils and waterways from historical gold mining activities where it was used to recover gold from the mined, crushed rock.

Mercury has been found in river bed sediments and some fish in the Loddon River as a result of historical gold mining.

Who should limit their intake of fish containing high levels of mercury?

The developing brain is sensitive to the effects of high mercury exposure.

It is therefore important that pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and young children (up to six years of age) limit their weekly intake of fish varieties known to contain high levels of mercury.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand provides advice on the number of serves of different types of commercially-sold fish that can be safely eaten. This information is available at [www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au)

The following advice applies to recreational fishing in the Loddon River downstream of Laanecoorie Reservoir to Bridgewater.
Which fish in the Loddon River downstream of Laanecoorie Reservoir to Bridgewater contain elevated levels of mercury?

The following fish when sourced from Loddon River are likely to contain elevated levels of mercury:

Common name/s: **Common carp (European carp)**

Common name/s: **Redfin (English perch)**

Common name: **Murray cod**

Common name: **Golden perch**
The stretch of the Loddon River where these fish are expected to contain elevated levels of mercury is marked in red on the map below.

How much of these fish can be eaten from this location?
Food Standards Australia New Zealand provides the following advice for eating fish with elevated mercury levels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fish</th>
<th>Advice for:</th>
<th>Number of serves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redfin, Murray cod and carp from the Loddon River: downstream of Laanecoorie Reservoir to Bridgewater.</td>
<td>Pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and young children (less than six years old)</td>
<td>Limit to one per fortnight and no other fish that fortnight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rest of the population</td>
<td>Limit to one per week and no other fish that week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden perch from the Loddon River: downstream of Laanecoorie Reservoir to Bridgewater.</td>
<td>Pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and young children (less than six years old)</td>
<td>Limit to one per week and no other fish that week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rest of the population</td>
<td>Limit to three per week and no other fish that week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**One serve:**
- Adult is 150 grams (e.g. two frozen crumbed fish fillets)
- Child under 6 years is 75 grams (e.g. three fish fingers)
Can I drink the water in the Loddon River?

Untreated river water can contain a range of contaminants, including micro-organisms that may cause illness. It is therefore not recommended that people drink untreated river water, regardless of its source.

For people living along rivers where a town drinking water supply is not available, rainwater collected from the roof is recognised as the most reliable and safest way to source drinking water.

Bush campers should carry in water for drinking. Alternatively, untreated river water needs to be boiled before drinking or being used for cooking.

Is it safe to drink tap water supplied by the local water authority?

Yes. Coliban Water supplies safe drinking water to people in this area. Samples of this drinking water are regularly tested, and all mercury levels are well below the health-based Australian Drinking Water Guideline value.

Further information

Fishing in Victoria: Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transports and Resources:

Mercury in fish and eating fish during pregnancy:
Food Standards Australia New Zealand: www.foodstandards.gov.au
Better Health Channel: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
NSW Food Authority: www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au

Mercury and your health:
See your local doctor if you are concerned with your health or your family’s health.

For general information about drinking water quality or the potential health effects of chemicals contact the Environmental Health Unit, Department of Health and Human Services, on 1300 761 874.