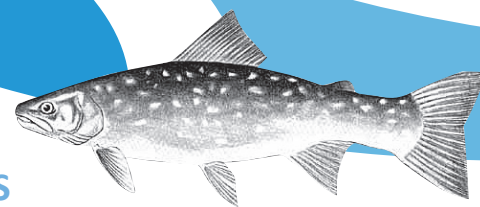




ARCTIC CHAR

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – CONTAMINANTS FACT SHEETS



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT ARCTIC CHAR?

Arctic char can be found in rivers and lakes in the northern region of the Northwest Territories, and in the Arctic Ocean. Arctic char can be land-locked or sea-run. Land-locked char stay in an enclosed lake, while sea-run char spend part of the time in the ocean.

Arctic char, like most other fish species, often contain some mercury. Mercury is a heavy metal contaminant (*see*

Mercury fact sheet - <http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca>) that can build up in the organs and in the meat.

Arctic char eat shrimp, insect larvae, snails, clams and some small fish. Fish that are low on the food chain (like Arctic char) tend to have low levels of mercury. Although land locked char tend to have higher levels of mercury than sea-run char, both types are safe to eat.

ARCTIC CHAR IS GOOD FOR US!

Arctic char is a source of healthy fats, called omega-3 fatty acids. These fats help to keep the heart healthy and are good for brain development. Arctic char is also an excellent source of protein. Protein is needed to build and repair all parts of the body.

The skin provides calcium and the meat is an excellent source of vitamin D. Calcium and vitamin D work together

to keep bones healthy and strong. When sunshine hits your skin, your body can make its own vitamin D but in the winter when the sunshine is limited, it is important to eat foods that provide this vitamin for us, like arctic char.

For more nutritional information on fish, see the GNWT Health and Social Services Nutritional Food Fact Sheets Series (<http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca>).

IS ARCTIC CHAR SAFE TO EAT?

Yes! Arctic char is safe to eat. It is also one of the healthiest foods available. The benefits of consuming arctic char are much greater than the risks of contaminant exposure. A

consumption notice has never been issued by the NWT's Chief Public Health Officer to limit the intake of arctic char.