



SUCKERS

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – CONTAMINANTS FACT SHEETS



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT SUCKERS?

Two common types of suckers in Northwest Territories include the longnose sucker and the white sucker. Suckers are not normally targeted as a fish for food, but are commonly eaten when they are caught.

Suckers, 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.

Suckers eat algae, plants and small invertebrates. Suckers do not eat other fish. Fish that do not eat other fish tend to have lower levels of mercury.

SUCKERS ARE GOOD FOR US!

Suckers are an excellent source of protein. Protein is needed to build and repair all parts of the body.

Suckers also provide healthy fats, called omega-3 fatty acids, and contain higher amounts of these fats than many other fish. These fats help to keep the heart healthy and are good for brain development.

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

ARE SUCKERS SAFE TO EAT?

Yes! Suckers are safe to eat. They are also some of the healthiest foods available. The benefits of consuming suckers are much greater than the risks of contaminant

exposure. In 2007, the NWT Chief Public Health Officer issued consumption advice to limit the intake of longnose suckers from a contaminated lake. This has since been lifted.