



WALLEYE (PICKEREL)

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – CONTAMINANTS FACT SHEETS



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT WALLEYE?

Walleye is also known as pickerel or doré. It can be found in the rivers feeding into Great Slave Lake, in the Mackenzie River watershed and in other inland lakes and rivers. It has a golden brown coloring and a white belly. It also has two dorsal fins on its back and large, silvery eyes.

Walleye, like most other fish species, often contains 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.

Walleye eat other fish and are high in the food chain. Fish that eat other fish tend to have higher levels of mercury due to a process called biomagnification (*see Contaminants Overview fact sheet* – <http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca>). As well, older fish tend to have higher levels of mercury due to a process called bioaccumulation (*see Contaminants Overview fact sheet* – <http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca>). Walleye are unique because they tend to have higher levels of mercury even though they are smaller in length. This does not necessarily mean that walleye are unsafe to eat.

WALLEYE IS GOOD FOR US!

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

Walleye is also rich in vitamin D, which works with calcium 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 walleye.

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 WALLEYE SAFE TO EAT?

Yes! Walleye are safe to eat. They are also some of the healthiest foods available. The benefits of consuming walleye are much greater than the risks of contaminant exposure. However, in certain locations, fish consumption notices have been issued in the past for walleye. Check the GNWT Health and Social Services website for current consumption notices (<http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca>).

By following consumption notices, you can safely enjoy all traditional foods.

In locations where fish consumption notices have not been issued for lake trout, it is recommended for pregnant women and children under 12 to follow the NWT General Fish Consumption Guidelines for walleye consumption (<http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca>).