

The city recommends avoiding the consumption of pike and large perch from Vanhankaupunginlahti bay

Significant concentrations of PFAS compounds have been found in fish in Helsinki's Vanhankaupunginlahti bay. The City of Helsinki recommends that especially at-risk groups, such as pregnant women, people of childbearing age, and children and adolescents, do not eat pike and large perch caught in the area. The recommendation remains in effect until further notice.

PFAS, or perfluoroalkyl compounds, are widely used in industry, including in cosmetics, technical clothing, frying pans and flame retardants. PFAS compounds have accumulated in the environment and organisms worldwide. Most of the exposure to PFASs occurs through diet. EU legislation sets the maximum levels for PFAS compounds in fishery products and other food categories.

PFASs can have adverse effects on human health and development. These effects are on fetal development and the development of young children. Exposure to PFASs can weaken the immune response (vaccination response). Exposure may also affect children's susceptibility to inflammation and reproductive health, for example.

Pollutant concentrations in fish were investigated in the autumn of 2023

The results are from a survey commissioned by the City of Helsinki, which was carried out in November 2023. For this survey, several different fish species (perch, zander, roach, whitefish, herring, pike) were caught in key fishing areas in Vanhankaupunginlahti, Kruunuvuorenselkä, Seurasaareselkä and Vuosaari. The caught fish were analysed for many contaminants, including mercury, dioxins, PCBs and PFAS compounds. The highest concentrations of several substances were measured in Vanhankaupunginlahti or Kruunuvuorenselkä. Much of Helsinki's commercial and recreational fishing occurs in the Vanhankaupunginlahti bay area.

The concentration of PFOS and the combined PFAS measured in pike and large perch exceeded the limit for these substances when these fish are used in the industrial production of food for infants and young children. However, for the sum of PFASs, the tolerable exposure limits established by the European Food Safety Authority would be exceeded for these fish species even at very low weekly intakes, including in adults.

Commercial fishers and food business operators selling fish are responsible for ensuring that batches of fish that exceed the legal limits are not placed on the market.

Eating fish is recommended when following safe consumption guidelines

Finnish fish is essentially a healthy and ecological food, and eating a variety of different fish species at least twice a week is recommended. Except for at-risk groups, previous national risk-benefit estimates suggest that the health benefits of fish consumption clearly outweigh the harms at the population level.

However, eating certain fish can expose people, especially those at risk, to compounds that are harmful to their health and development, such as dioxins, PCBs and mercury. For this reason, the Finnish Food Authority has given special recommendations to children, adolescents and people of childbearing age for eating fish. Children, adolescents and people of childbearing age can only eat pike 1–2 times a month. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should not eat pike at all.

The fish consumption recommendations are updated, if necessary, based on the results of the national EU fish IV project coordinated by the Food Agency and local follow-up studies.

[Safe use of fish](#)

[The EU fish IV project](#)