

Fishing in Darwin creeks

PFAS in wild caught fish, shellfish and crustaceans

The Northern Territory Department of Health is releasing precautionary dietary advice for frequent consumption of wild caught fish, shellfish and crustaceans from Ludmilla and Rapid Creeks.

Following studies undertaken by the Department of Defence and further advice from Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), a number of species caught in Ludmilla and Rapid creeks have been found to contain small amounts of per-and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

While it is safe to eat moderate amounts of wild caught fish from Ludmilla Creek and Rapid Creek estuaries it is recommended people avoid consuming wild caught fish from the freshwater reaches of Rapid Creeks.

A poster has been developed to help people understand the fish dietary recommendations, which illustrates portion sizes and dietary advice. To view, visit www.nt.gov.au and search PFAS.

Recommended fish consumption for affected areas in the Darwin region:

	Adults	Young children (2 – 6 years)
Freshwater fish <i>Rapid Creek</i>	Avoid	Avoid
Fish fillets <i>Ludmilla Creek or Rapid Creek estuary</i>	2 serves / week <i>150g serve</i>	1 serve / week <i>75g serve</i>
	OR	OR
Molluscs <i>Longbums, whelk, periwinkles</i>	2 serves / week <i>100g serve, about ¾ cup, about 12 longbums</i>	1 serve / week <i>50g serve, about 1/2 cup, about 6 longbums</i>
	OR	OR
Freshwater Redclaw <i>Rapid Creek</i>	1 serve / week <i>100g serve, about 2 crayfish</i>	1 serve / month <i>50g serve, about 1 crayfish</i>
	OR	OR
Crabs and prawns <i>Ludmilla and Rapid Creek Estuaries</i>	2 - 4 serves / week <i>100g serve, about 1/2 crab</i>	2 serves / week <i>50g serve, about 1/4 crab</i>
	OR	OR
Fish livers <i>Ludmilla and Rapid Creek Estuaries</i>	1 liver piece per week <i>5g piece, about 1 teaspoon</i>	Avoid
	OR	OR
Crab guts <i>Ludmilla and Rapid Creek Estuaries</i>	1 serve / week <i>50g serve, about 1 crab</i>	1 serve / month <i>25g serve, about ½ portion crab guts</i>

For more information on recommended consumption and to view the full FSANZ reports, visit the NT EPA website at www.ntepa.nt.gov.au/waste-pollution/compliance/pfas-investigation

What are PFAS?

PFAS are manufactured chemicals used in products that resist heat, oil, stains and water. These chemicals are used throughout the world and are found in many common household products such as shampoo, non-stick cookware, paints and pesticides. Firefighting foams typically contain PFAS due to their historical effectiveness in fighting liquid fuel fires. PFAS chemicals have been identified as emerging contaminants, and because they do not breakdown in the environment they have the potential to bio-accumulate in plants, animals and people.

How does it affect my health?

According to leading Australian authorities, there is currently no consistent evidence of human health effects related to PFAS exposure; however, the possibility cannot be excluded.

The potential health risk of PFAS increases if aquatic species from contaminated areas are frequently consumed over a long period. The risk to tourists and visitors who may occasionally eat fish from the affected area of the river is considered to be very low.

Should I stop eating wild caught fish in the Darwin area?

It is safe to eat wild caught fish from the Darwin area and advice provided on limiting your consumption refers to the Ludmilla and Rapid Creeks only.

The Department of Health recommends you maintain a healthy diet, which includes eating a variety of fish. It is important you also consider and follow the FSANZ advice on fish consumption relating to other contaminants. Visit www.foodstandards.gov.au for further information.

How did PFAS get into the Darwin-creeks?

Firefighting foams containing PFAS used during training exercises leached into groundwater and through water run-off via drains and into the Rapid, Ludmilla, Sadgroves and Reichardt Creeks. Due to tidal flushing of and PFAS dilution in Sadgroves and Reichardt Creeks, dietary advice has not applied to fish caught from these creeks.

Who is most at risk of consuming PFAS?

Local fishers, anglers and Aboriginal people who consume aquatic species from Rapid and Ludmilla Creeks frequently and over a long period of time are most at risk of being affected by PFAS.

Although there is no conclusive risk to people, it is advised that consumption is limited as a precaution

Questions?

If you have questions relating to food consumption and PFAS please contact 1800 095 646 or email envirohealth@nt.gov.au for more information.