More than 50 million people in the United States said they fished in 2018, including 1,671,435 in Pennsylvania. More people fished than played golf and tennis combined. A lot of people must enjoy fishing. Do you think many of them think about the ways fishing makes life better?

This *PLAY* issue looks at the many benefits of fishing. Lots of people in Pennsylvania enjoy the benefits of fishing—even those who do not fish.

**Vocabulary (Watch for these words!)**

- **Contaminants** - harmful chemicals that collect in fish skin, muscle and fat
- **Dexterity** - coordination of small muscle groups like those in the hand
- **Economy** - money being made and money being spent
- **Fish consumption advisories** - recommendations to limit or avoid eating certain fish species due to chemical contamination
- **Nervous system** - network of nerves and cells that carry messages from the brain and spinal column to various parts of the body
- **Screen time** - time spent using a device such as a computer, television or game console
- **Wellbeing** - when you feel good and are content
Physical Benefits of Fishing

Fishing requires the use of several different body parts. If you were looking for another reason to fish, getting outside and exercising your ‘fishing muscles’ is a good one.
Brain
Your brain is your most important piece of fishing equipment. It is used for planning fishing trips, deciding when and where to fish and selecting which tackle to use. Your brain is using things you learned from previous fishing trips, or that you have read, heard or seen. Your brain is also the center of the nervous system that makes your body move. Fishing requires a lot of brainpower.

Eyes
Studies show that being outside improves distance vision. Tying knots and casting also improves eye-hand coordination.

Hands
Tying knots requires dexterity. Tying flies and other tackle crafts like building lures or rods requires dexterity. These activities keep your joints healthy. Remember, practice makes perfect.

Arms
Casting requires your arm, back and shoulder to work together. Casting a lure is not as hard as a push-up, but the more you cast, the more you exercise your muscles.

Skin
Your skin makes vitamin D, when exposed to sunlight. This vitamin is important for healthy bones. Some sunlight is healthy, but too much sunlight can be harmful to your skin or cause a sunburn. Make sure you protect yourself.

Lungs
The fresh air you get when fishing is good for you. Breathing indoor air all day is not good for your lungs. That is why you may feel tired or not your best when stuck inside. Fresh air can give you more energy, help you sleep better and help your immune system.

Heart
Being outside and moving your body is good for your heart. Walking to your spot increases your heart rate. Your heart rate can also increase when you catch the big one. Eating fish can help your heart.

Legs
Walking to your spot is great exercise. Standing while you fish uses the muscles in your back, hips, abdomen and legs. Wading in a stream or lake provides even more exercise.

Fishing is a great activity for inactive people or those with injuries or disabilities.
**Fishing and Wellbeing**

**Wellbeing** is when you feel good and are content. There are a lot of things that can hurt your wellbeing. A busy schedule and too much **screen time** can leave us feeling stressed. Fishing is a wonderful way to help your wellbeing.

**Relaxing**

Fish often live in beautiful places. Being outdoors and near water can be relaxing. The sights, sounds, smells and action of fishing can be a great break from the routine. Not catching fish can be frustrating, but a difficult day of fishing is better than a good day at work or school.

**Time with family**

Planning and taking fishing trips can help family members feel closer and more relaxed. Plus, most adults say they would fish more if they were asked by a child to go fishing. So, kids, ask someone to take you fishing. Tell them it is fun and a great way to improve everyone’s wellbeing.
Spending time with friends
Fishing together can improve friendships. Competition between friends can also be fun. See who can catch the first, biggest or most fish. Do you have friends who don’t fish? If so, ask your parents if these friends can fish with your family.

Challenges and rewards
Finding success in fishing is like solving a puzzle. Sometimes the fish are easy to catch, sometimes fish are not so easy to catch. Meeting the challenges and finding success is rewarding. Trying a new lure or technique, fishing a new spot, or trying fly fishing offer new challenges.

Disconnecting from technology
Disconnecting from screens and other technology gives your brain a chance to relax and reset. This technology can be helpful in planning a trip, shopping for tackle or keeping up with the weather. But, leaving your devices at home or in the car when fishing will help you disconnect from technology and reconnect with nature.
Fish is Good Food

Doctors recommend that fish be part of a healthy diet. Fish have lots of protein, vitamins and nutrients to keep you healthy. Before eating the fish you caught, learn about contaminants. You cannot see, smell or taste contaminants. The Pennsylvania Department of Health, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection regularly tests some species for contaminants in certain waters. Then, these agencies issue fish consumption advisories based on the results. Information on advisories can be found on PFBC’s website at www.fishandboat.com.

There are several ways to reduce the quantity of contaminants in the fish you eat:

1. Eat smaller, younger fish.
2. Eat more panfish and fewer large gamefish, carp and catfish.
3. Remove all skin.
4. Remove fat from the fish’s backbone and belly. Cut away the dark meat along the lateral line.
5. Grill, bake or broil fish on a rack so remaining fat drips away.
Fishing is Big Business

Fishing is a big part of Pennsylvania’s economy. The economy is all about money being made and money being spent. You are helping the economy every time you fish. Studies showed that nationally in 2016, anglers spent an average of $103 on each fishing trip. In 2016, Pennsylvania anglers spent $500 million.

How do anglers spend their money?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fishing equipment</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Lodging</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other costs</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are a lot of different businesses who serve anglers. This includes the bait shop. But, it also includes gas stations, stores where anglers buy snacks and meals, the company that sells bait to the bait shops and many others. Many of the people working at these locations may not even fish. So, help the economy and improve your health—fish more often!