

Farmed Salmon: Is It Healthful?

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The Health Benefits of Eating Fish

To help prevent heart disease, nutrition and health experts advise us to eat fish a couple times each week. Eating fish is also linked to reduced cognitive decline among the elderly and more optimal brain development during fetal growth and infancy. Yet fewer than 20% of Americans eat at least 8 ounces of fish each week. Though there are many barriers to fish consumption, one is the concern about seafood safety, especially the safety of farmed salmon.



Risks and Benefits

To compare the benefits and risks of eating fish, researchers reviewed the existing evidence and published their findings in the Journal of the American Medical Association. This is what they found: If 100,000 Americans ate farmed salmon twice weekly over a lifetime of 70 years, the PCBs and dioxins may cause 24 additional cancer deaths, but more than 7,000 deaths from heart disease would be prevented.

PCBs and Dioxins

Banned in the 1970s, PCBs were used in industrial processing. Dioxins are by-products of incinerating waste, pesticide production, the production of some types of plastics, and other processes. The levels of both groups of compounds in the environment and the human body have declined significantly.



Reducing Your Risk

Since PCBs and dioxins are stored in fat tissue, you can remove some of these contaminants by removing some of the fat and skin of the fish. If you cannot remove the skin, puncture it so that some of the fat can drain off. Cook your fish on a rack so the fat can drip away.

Disclosure: Jill recently signed on as a consultant to the Norwegian Seafood Council.

