

SHARE
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Variety is Safety

After last month's column recommended eating more salmon, several people asked me about the risks involved. What about mercury? What about pesticides? Is fish really safe to eat? Those are valid concerns, because large fish like salmon do accumulate mercury and some types of pesticides. The longer they live and the larger they get, the more they are likely to have in their muscles and fat. Mercury and pesticides are definitely not good for us.

However, omega-3 fats and fish oils are definitely good for us, lowering our risks of heart disease. There is some evidence that these fish oils might protect our joints from rheumatoid arthritis and other illnesses as well. Fish is a low-calorie, high-quality protein source. What are we supposed to do?

Depending on the source of the fish, the age or size, and the method of measuring, there may well be some risks involved in eating fish. Wild fish may accumulate mercury during their years of free swimming in the ocean. Farmed fish and inland fish may be exposed to pesticides and fertilizers from the surrounding land. These can all collect in the muscles.

And finally, there is no agreement yet on how much of any of these things it really takes to harm us. It probably depends on the age, health and activity level of the person eating the fish, as well as how much fish the person eats.

The only known, definite damage has been in people who were eating only one type of fish, and who ate that fish almost daily for over half a year. When they changed their diets and ate a wider variety of fish, the problems gradually diminished. While there will surely be more studies and more reports in the coming years, the consensus at this point seems to be - **Eat a**

Variety of Fish. Do not depend on only one type of fish, don't eat the same fish day after day.

Salmon today, trout tomorrow, beans the day after, vary your diet to get the most benefit with the least amount of risk.

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