

Farmed Salmon vs. Wild Salmon

November 15, 2005

This morning I was reading the “health” section of the Chronicle and came across an editorial by Dr. Dodge on eating farmed salmon. The implication was that the benefits of eating farmed raised salmon probably outweigh the risks. This is an opinion that I would differ with. Certainly for my patients that are health-conscious.

Recently, the EPA released results of a study on PCB's, Toxaphene and Dieldrin; all potentially toxic and possibly carcinogenic chemicals. The study checked farm raised salmon from around the world. The maximum recommended meals per month of Farm Raised Salmon by the EPA is ... get this ... ONE !. Yes that is one serving per month, that weighs eight ounces before cooking. The toxins in farm raised salmon from Scotland were so bad, the EPA would restrict the servings to no more than six per year.

The EPA is more stringent in their recommendations than the FDA; simply because the FDA has not updated its PCB health limit for commercial seafood since it was originally issued in 1984. The world has become more toxic in the last 21 years. When compared to other foods such as beef, pork, poultry, and typical commercial seafood; farmed salmon has up to 40 times more PCBs.

Recently published in Science was a study done by the Indiana University and five other research centers. Research has been done on over 700 farmed and wild salmon (2 metric tons) purchased from around the world. Concentrations of 14 organochlorine toxins were analyzed. The toxins studied (you are eating these with farmed salmon) were polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB'S), dioxins, toxaphene, dieldrin, hexachlorobenzene (HCB), lindane, heptachlor epoxide, cis-nonachlor, trans-nonachlor, gamma-chlordane, alpha-chlordane, Mirex, endrin and total DDT. Does this sound like Salmon or a chemical pie?

According to the US Department of health and Human Services, many of these toxins are reasonably anticipated to be human carcinogens. With few exceptions, farmed salmon are raised in dense pens, in the ocean. This dense proximity of the fish encourages disease, so antibiotics are included in their diet. We don't have time to go into the implications of excess antibiotics and the resulting resistance of bacteria in humans. These fish do not eat a normal Salmon diet and thus are not pink, so they are fed dyes. They are also given hormones to encourage weight gain. When you eat farmed salmon, you get antibiotics, hormones, and dye in addition to the above chemicals. Why keep our heads buried in the sand? That attitude is part of what is creating the health crisis in our country. Should you eat something that by the EPA standards is so toxic most Americans can have only 8 oz. a month ?

Think about the level of toxic chemicals in much of our food. Some of these chemicals have been tested individually for human consumption, but very few have been tested in combination. Chemicals are in combination in single foods and certainly when you choose to eat more than one thing.

Lets bring our heads out of the sand and look around, make the reasonable choice to eat wild salmon or other wild caught fish, to minimize your exposure to toxins. With the many benefits of fish oil, many patients supplement their diet with pills or liquid. If you do this, check the label and make sure there it is independently tested for rancidity (fish spoils) , mercury, lead, arsenic, cadmium, EPA and DHA levels, PCB's, and other dioxin like compounds.

Some of the information above was taken from the following websites. For further information, check them out.

<http://www.farmedanddangerous.org/>

<http://www.ewg.org/reports/farmedPCBs/es.php>

<http://newsinfo.iu.edu/news/page/normal/1225.html>

<http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/fish/advisories/newsep04.htm>

<http://www.albany.edu/ihe/salmonstudy/la-me-salmon9jan09,1,6283045.pdf>

<http://www.albany.edu/ihe/salmonstudy/graph1.html>

http://www.shns.com/shns/g_index2.cfm?action=detail&pk=TOXICSALMON-01-08-04