

By now, most Americans have heard the message to limit red meat in their diets and eat more fish for better health.

According to Karen Collins, MS, RD, [nutrition](#) advisor to the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR), "Fish is a great choice because it is naturally low in saturated fat. Some fish are also high in omega 3 fats, which are heart-healthy and help reduce inflammation throughout the body." Chronic inflammation has been linked to increased [cancer](#) risk.

Many Reasons to Be Cautious

But for every well-documented reason to eat more fish, it seems as though the news is always filled with compelling reasons to be wary.

Farmed salmon may have high levels of PCBs. The Food and Drug Administration has issued [guidelines on tuna consumption for women and young children](#) due to methylmercury contamination. A recent study concluded that [farmed tilapia](#) has very high levels of omega-6 fats but low levels of omega-3 fatty acids.

Environmentalists also warn about overfishing and the destruction of ocean species due to certain fishing methods, some of which damage the coral or ocean floor and lead to by-catch of dolphins and sea turtles. Some farm fisheries may allow fish to escape and threaten native species, and water and waste may not be treated before discharged to the surrounding habitat.

But all of the warnings should not deter you from including fish in the diet several times per week. Not doing so could mean missing out on important health benefits, says AICR Nutritionist Alice Bender, MS, RD.

"Fish makes a tasty and lean entrée with a healthy dose of B vitamins and minerals including potassium, magnesium and selenium. Simply baked or broiled with lemon and herbs, it's a welcome break from chicken and can help you and your family limit red meat -- as recommended by AICR. "

The AICR dietitians also recommend choosing a variety of seafood in appropriate amounts to minimize exposure to mercury and other contaminants.

Here's an AICR guide to help you make fish and seafood choices that are win-win -- good for your health and good for the environment.

For environmentally sound and low-contaminant choices high in omega-3 fats:

- Wild salmon (fresh, frozen or canned)
- Arctic char
- Sablefish (black cod)
- Sardines
- Atlantic mackerel
- Farmed rainbow trout
- Farmed striped bass
- Barramundi
- Mussels

Low contaminants, eco-friendly and low saturated fat:

- Pacific halibut
- Alaskan pollock
- Catfish
- Tilapia or shrimp from U.S. farms

- Wild shrimp
- Clams
- Oysters
- Bay scallops

Special recommendations for women of childbearing age and children up to age 12:

- Avoid swordfish, shark, tile fish and king mackerel
- Consume up to 12 ounces per week (less for those under 6 years old) of a variety of other seafood.
- Preparing fish and seafood
- Limit or avoid the breaded, battered and fried seafood options to keep calories and saturated fat low and to avoid trans fats.
- Before cooking, remove the skin and fat where PCBs concentrate. Cook on a rack or grill which allows fat to drain.

Source

American Institute for Cancer Research