

USDA and HHS Guidelines Call for More Fish

Seafood Must Be Good for You and Good for the Environment

(January 12, 2004 -- Washington, DC) The U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Agriculture (USDA) today released their new Dietary Guidelines for Americans (<http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines/>), calling for consumers to consume two servings (about eight ounces) of fish per week. This recommendation is intended to boost consumers' intake of omega-3 fatty acids to reduce their risk of heart disease. Environmental Defense encourages consumers to choose fish low in contaminants and that are fished or farmed in an ecologically sound manner.

"Scientific studies suggest that eating fish, especially those high in omega-3 fatty acids, helps to protect against heart ailments, but when it comes to their health benefits, all fish are not equal. Consumers should be aware of the potential risks from seafood contaminants such as mercury and PCBs," said Environmental Defense scientist [Dr. Rebecca Goldberg](#).

The expert committee that drafted the Dietary Guidelines concurs, writing in its report that "Federal and State advisories provide current information about lowering exposure to environmental contaminants in fish. For example, methylmercury is a heavy metal toxin found in varying levels in nearly all fish and shellfish. For most people, the risk from mercury by eating fish and shellfish is not a health concern. However, some fish contain higher levels of mercury that may harm an unborn baby or young child's developing nervous system. The risks from mercury in fish and shellfish depend on the amount of fish eaten and the levels of mercury in the fish."

Environmental Defense's Seafood Selector is a convenient guide that helps consumers navigate the murky waters of choosing seafood. The Seafood Selector, which ranks fish by "eco-best" and "eco-worst", lists health advisories for fish high in contaminants. Omega-3 levels for over 100 types of fish and shellfish can be found at www.oceansalive.org/go/seafood.

"Choosing seafood that's both healthy for you and the oceans can be challenging," said Environmental Defense research associate Tim Fitzgerald. "Most of the seafood available in the U.S. is imported from abroad. Unfortunately, some fisheries are overexploited and some fish farming harms marine ecosystems. Environmental Defense has created this guide to help consumers make these important choices."

For more information visit www.oceansalive.org/go/seafood. As part of their new campaign Oceans Alive, Environmental Defense calls for consumers to Eat Smart. Visitors can:

- Download and print a wallet-size Seafood Selector;
- View Eco-Best and Eco-Worst Fish;
- Check consumption advisories for contaminants;
- Look up omega-3 levels and other nutritional information
- Read our Buying Guide for seafood; and
- Choose Best Recipes.