

Genetically Modified Salmon

Recently hitting the media is information regarding genetically modified salmon. Atlantic salmon may be the first genetically modified animal available to buy at grocery stores and restaurants. With dwindling wild populations of Atlantic salmon and pollutants in farmed salmon, the transgenic fish is projected to be a healthy, eco-friendly and profitable solution to increasing demand. The FDA has determined it is safe to eat and will most likely decide it is safe for the environment; then the FDA will decide if the fish must be labeled “genetically modified”

How does this work? Genes from two other fish are spliced into the Atlantic salmon, allowing its hormones to stay active longer so the fish will grow to normal size twice as fast. Initial studies appear to prove the mutant fish is safe to eat, with a slight concern for increased allergic response. Farming of the fish will be inland, which should eliminate risk of farming pollutants or mutant fish from entering open waters. However, opponents are not convinced by the limited studies which were submitted by marketers of the fish.

Besides the increased allergen response, experts are concerned about the long-term safety of eating a hormone-altered fish and the environmental impact once the fish is mass produced. Approval of the genetically altered Atlantic salmon also opens the door for other transgenic animals to enter the food supply. If it is not labeled, consumers are unable make an educated choice at the grocery store or when eating out.

The FDA probably will not require the genetically modified Atlantic salmon to be labeled since it tastes the same and has the same nutrient profile of regular Atlantic salmon, and probably will be deemed safe. Similar taste, nutrient profile and safety are the criteria the FDA used when it approved genetically altered corn and soy products to be marketed without a label. However, consumers still have options if they are concerned about a potential allergic response or the long term effect of eating fish with hyped hormones.

Healthy Results Recommendation:

Avoid unlabeled salmon and choose wild salmon over farmed. Choose fresh, frozen or canned wild Alaskan and Washington salmon which are eco-friendly and high in the bio-available form of the healthy fat, omega 3. Other fish high in the desirable omega 3 fatty acids are trout, halibut, mackerel, herring and sardines. At Healthy Results, we advise against unnatural foods, such as genetically modified foods. We also acknowledge that what you eat is your choice and want to put out information that allows you to make your own educated decision.