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## PRINT EDITION

## This transgenic little piggy boosts your brain

01 April 2006

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HERE'S an unlikely food to add to the list of healthy choices for your heart and brain: pork sausages.

There's just one snag. You'll have to stomach the idea of eating meat from transgenic pigs. The pigs have been engineered to produce large quantities of omega-3 fatty acids, found at high concentrations in foods such as flax seeds and certain fish. A recent study has questioned the belief that they protect against heart disease (see "60 Seconds"), but this may be because of toxic mercury in fish. Transgenic pork containing omega-3s would avoid this potential problem, and also circumvent fears about over-fishing. Omega-3s are still thought to boost brain power.

A team at [Harvard Medical School](#) in Boston used cloning techniques to produce piglets carrying a version of a gene from a nematode worm that converts unhealthy omega-6 fatty acids into omega-3s. Omega-3s made up an average of 8 per cent of the total fat in muscles of the six transgenic pigs, compared with 1 to 2 per cent in normal pigs (*Natu* 10.1038/nbt1198).

As for the taste of the pigs, no one knows, as the Food and Drug Administration has n pig meat for consumption. For those who prefer a drumstick or a burger, modified chic pipeline, team member [Jing Kang](#) says.

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