



Seafood Health Facts: Making Smart choices

Balancing the Benefits and Risks of Seafood Consumption

Resources for Healthcare Providers and Consumers

General Information for Patients and Consumers [1]

This section includes information for the general public that is summarized to emphasize major points in a way that is easy to read and understand. It is generally intended for healthcare providers' patients and consumers who purchase or eat seafood.

Overview of the Health Benefits of Seafood

Seafood is a healthy food choice for people of all ages. It provides key nutrients for infants and children and is a healthy protein source for adults.

Overall nutritional benefits of seafood:

- Good source of high-quality protein
- Low in saturated fat
- A good source of omega-3 fatty acids
- Rich in vitamins and minerals

Omega-3 fatty acids and Health

Seafood is the main food source for the long-chain omega-3 fatty acids DHA and EPA. These nutrients promote healthy brain and eye development in children and reduce the risk of heart disease in adults.

U.S. health organizations recommend a daily EPA+DHA intake of 250 milligrams (mg) for most people and 1000 mg for those with cardiovascular disease. The *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend consuming at least 8 ounces of seafood per week to reach an average daily intake of 250 mg per day. Pregnant and nursing women and their children also need a regular source of EPA and DHA. Oily ocean fish, like salmon, herring, mackerel and sardines, are good sources of EPA and DHA. Plant based omega-3 fatty such as alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), does not have the same health benefits.

[To see additional information of the nutritional benefits of seafood click here.](#) [2]

Balancing Benefits and Risks

 With the many varieties of seafood available, it can be overwhelming to gather all the information on the benefits and risk associated with different types of seafood. Here are some facts that will help you make choices about seafood in your diet:

Many scientific studies have found that the benefits of eating seafood greatly outweigh the risks and that removing seafood from the diet can have negative effects on human health.

The most commonly consumed seafoods in the United States present very little risk while offering many health and nutritional benefits.

The main health risk from eating seafood is exposure to harmful bacteria, which can be prevented through proper handling, storing, and cooking. Consumers should focus on eliminating harmful bacteria in their seafood with safe food handling practices. [To see additional information on seafood safety issues for specific hazards or products click here](#) [3].

All people are encouraged to eat seafood twice a week. See the special guidelines below for information for special groups that can help sensitive individuals minimize their exposure to potentially harmful bacteria or environmental contaminants such as mercury.

Guidelines for Consumers

The guidelines below can help individuals maximize the healthy nutritional benefits associated with eating seafood and minimize any potential food safety risks.

Guidelines for Consumers

One serving= 4 ounces of cooked fish or shellfish (about the size of the palm of your hand)

Healthy teenagers and adults



- ◆ Should eat 8 or more ounces of a variety of seafood per week
- ◆ Can reduce their risk of heart disease by eating seafood regularly
- ◆ Can have added benefits from seafood high in EPA and DHA
- ◆ May eat raw or partially cooked seafood at their own risk

Women who are or may become pregnant or who are breastfeeding



- ◆ Should eat *at least* 8 ounces and up to 12 ounces of a variety of seafood per week
- ◆ Mothers and their infants can benefit from seafood, especially types high in EPA and DHA
- ◆ Can eat up to 6-ounces of albacore (white) tuna per week
- ◆ Should avoid shark, swordfish, tilefish, and king mackerel due to mercury
- ◆ Should not eat raw or partially cooked seafood, including smoked fish

Children 12 years and under



- ◆ Should eat about 8 ounces of a variety of seafood per week
- ◆ May benefit from eating seafood, especially types high in EPA and DHA
- ◆ Can eat up to 6 ounces of albacore (white) tuna per week
- ◆ Should avoid shark, swordfish, tilefish and king mackerel due to mercury
- ◆ Young children should not eat raw/partially cooked seafood, including smoked fish

Immuno-compromised individuals and older adults



- ◆ Should eat a variety of seafood at least twice per week
- ◆ Can reduce their risk for heart disease by eating seafood regularly
- ◆ Can have added benefits from seafood high in EPA and DHA
- ◆ Should not eat raw or partially cooked seafood

Sources: 2010 USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans; U.S Food and Drug Administration; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; American Heart Association; and Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences

Seafood and Health Brochure: Advice for Consumers

This pamphlet is designed to provide an overview of seafood's positive nutritional benefits and summarize current advice about seafood consumption for healthy adults, women and children, and individuals who catch their own fish or shellfish.  [final-seafood-health-3fold-brochure.pdf](#) [4]



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Links

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