



Seafood Health Facts: Making Smart choices

Balancing the Benefits and Risks of Seafood Consumption

Resources for Healthcare Providers and Consumers

[Overview of the U.S. Seafood Supply \[1\]](#)

Seafood in the American Diet

Over the past two decades per capita consumption of seafood products (fish + shellfish) in the U.S. has ranged from a low of 14.6 pounds per person in 1997 to a record high of 16.5 pounds in 2004 and 2006. Since 2004, U.S. annual consumption of fish and shellfish has gradually decreased to 14.9 pounds per person in 2018. For comparison, U.S. annual per capita consumption of other food commodities in 2016 is: beef about 55.4 pounds, chicken near 90.1 pounds, dairy products over 600 pounds, vegetables over 380 pounds, fruits over 250 pounds, and flour and cereal products over 170 pounds.

Description of Top Commercial Seafood Items

A wide variety of fish and shellfish products are available in the marketplace. It has been estimated that hundreds of different species of fish and shellfish are sold annually. However, ten different types of fish and shellfish products represent more than 80% of the seafood consumed in the U.S. About 55% of all seafood consumed in 2017 was limited to three types of seafood: shrimp, canned tuna and salmon. The top seafood products consumed in the U.S. are shown in the table on this page. This list has been consistent over the past decade except for tilapia consumption which has increased steadily since 2002 and for scallops and flatfish (flounders and sole) which have moved in and out of the top 10 products during this period. One new product which has increased in consumption is fish from Pangasius species, that are called basa, swai or tra in the U.S. These fish are farmed in freshwater and primarily imported from the Mekong River delta region in Vietnam.

Types of Seafood Products Consumed

About three fourths of the seafood products consumed in the U.S. are **fresh or frozen**, and consumption of these product forms has reached a plateau. Slightly more than half of the fresh or frozen products consumed are finfish and less than half shellfish, primarily shrimp. **Canned seafood** products account for slightly less than one fourth of the seafood consumed in the U.S., and the amount has decreased steadily over the past two decades. Canned tuna represents about 60% of all the canned seafood consumed in the U.S., but the amount of canned tuna consumed has fallen from a high of 3.9 pounds per person in 1989 to 0 pounds in 2017. Canned shellfish represents over 13% of all canned products consumed, followed by sardines at 6.5%. **Cured seafood** items such as smoked, salted or pickled products have consistently been about 2% of all seafood products consumed over the past two decades.

The U.S. Seafood Supply

Imported Seafood Supply - The majority of seafood consumed in the U.S. is imported from other countries around the world. This number continues to rise in order to meet consumer demand. However, NOAA Fisheries data shows that a significant portion of this imported seafood is caught by American fishermen, exported overseas for processing, and then imported back to the U.S. With much of this imported seafood representing fresh or frozen products. Shrimp is the leading fresh or frozen product imported into the U.S. followed by freshwater fillets and steaks, salmon, tuna, groundfish (cod, haddock and hakes), crabs and crabmeat, frozen fish blocks used to make fish sticks or portions, squid and lobster. The leading foreign suppliers of seafood products to the U.S. in 2014 were China, Canada, India, Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia. About two thirds of the edible seafood imported into the U.S. came from these six countries.

U.S. Domestic Seafood Supply

Commercial Fisheries - About 9.5 billion pounds of edible seafood products with a dockside value of \$5.4 billion were landed in the U.S. in 2017. The majority (over 80%) of this catch is finfish and the rest is shellfish. The leading species landed by U.S. commercial fishermen in 2017 in descending order includes: Alaska pollock, menhaden, tuna, cod, and salmon. Alaska led all states in volume of landings in 2017 with over 60% of the total catch; followed by the Gulf of Mexico 14%, Atlantic 13%, and Pacific regions at 12%.

Aquaculture Production - The production of farm raised fish and shellfish in 2017 was about 633 million pounds worth \$1.5 billion. In the United States, the amount of fish and shellfish harvested from the wild annually is more than 10 times greater than the amount produced by domestic aquaculture farms. Pond raised catfish represents a little over half of the total farm raised seafood products produced annually in the U.S. Other important domestically produced aquaculture products in order of the quantity produced include: crawfish, trout, oysters, salmon, tilapia, striped bass, clams, shrimp and mussels.

Processed Products - The value of seafood products processed in the U.S. in 2017 was over \$10 billion. Government figures estimate that there were 3,137 seafood processing and wholesale plants in the U.S. that employed almost 63,000 people in 2017. States with the largest number of people employed in seafood processing or wholesale plants were: Alaska, Washington, California, Massachusetts, Florida, Texas, Mississippi and Louisiana. The major seafood products processed in the U.S. were canned seafood (primarily tuna and sardine), fresh and frozen fish fillets and steaks, breaded fish portions and sticks, and breaded shrimp.

Recreational Fisheries - According to National Marine Fisheries Service estimates, in 2017, more than 8 million anglers made over 202 million marine recreational fishing trips in the U.S. The estimated total marine recreational catch was nearly 397 million fish. The estimated total weight of the recreationally harvested catch was almost 447 million pounds. Nationally, most (56 percent in numbers of fish) of the recreational catch came from estuaries, 34 percent from state or territorial coastal marine waters 0 to 3 miles from the shore, and nearly 9 percent from federal ocean waters from 3 to 200 miles from shore.

References:

Food Consumption Reference: [Food Availability Per Capita Data System](#). [2]

Seafood Supply and Commercial Fisheries Reference: National Marine Fisheries Service, 2017. [Fisheries of the United States 2017](#) [3].

Sidebar Image:





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