



Seafood Health Facts: Making Smart choices

Balancing the Benefits and Risks of Seafood Consumption

Resources for Healthcare Providers and Consumers

Seafood and Current Dietary Recommendations [1]

Food alone cannot make a person healthy, but good eating habits based on variety and moderation can help keep a person health and may even improve health. Every five years the U.S Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services release Dietary Guidelines. These guidelines are intended to help people maintain their health. To view the most recent *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* [click here](#) [2].

The major findings that emerged from the committee's review of the scientific evidence that describe the steps that can be taken to help all Americans adopt health-promoting nutrition and physical activity guidelines are:

1. Reduce the incidence and prevalence of obesity of the US population by reducing overall calorie intake and increasing physical activity.
2. Shift food intake patterns to a more plant-based diet that emphasizes vegetables, cooked dry beans and peas, fruits, whole grains, nuts, and seeds. In addition, increase the intake of seafood and fat-free and low-fat milk and milk products and consume only moderate amounts of lean meats, poultry, and eggs.
3. Significantly reduce intake of foods containing added sugars and solid fats because these dietary components contribute excess calories and few, if any, nutrients. In addition, reduce sodium intake and lower intake of refined grains, especially refined grains that are coupled with added sugar, solid fat, and sodium.
4. Meet the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.

Eating seafood twice a week is one way that could help many Americans implement these recommendations. Seafood is a nutrient dense high protein food that has relatively low levels of total fat, saturated fat, sodium and calories as compared to other foods. For these reasons, current guidelines suggest that Americans should increase their seafood consumption by replacing some meat or poultry with seafood. A total intake of 8 or more ounces per week, or about 20% of total recommended intake of protein foods of a variety of seafood is recommended. In addition, the omega-3 fatty acids found in seafood may provide other significant health benefits. Healthy preparation methods are essential for keeping seafood's nutritional benefits.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. Numerous studies have associated diets that are low in total fat, saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol with reduced risk of coronary heart disease. The current Dietary Guidelines concluded that there is moderate evidence that shows that consumption of two servings of seafood per week (4 ounces per serving), which provide an average of 250 milligrams (mg) per day of long-chain *n*-3 (omega-3) fatty acids, is associated with reduced cardiac mortality from coronary heart disease or sudden death in persons with and without cardiovascular disease. Seafood can help individuals maintain a heart healthy diet because it is one of the best dietary sources of omega-3 fatty acids.

Key Recommendations

The *Dietary Guidelines'* Key Recommendations for healthy eating patterns should be applied in their entirety, given the interconnected relationship that each dietary component can have with others.

Consume a healthy eating pattern that accounts for all foods and beverages within an appropriate calorie level.

A healthy eating pattern includes:^[1] [3]

- A variety of vegetables from all of the subgroups—dark green, red and orange, legumes (beans and peas), starchy, and other
- Fruits, especially whole fruits
- Grains, at least half of which are whole grains
- Fat-free or low-fat dairy, including milk, yogurt, cheese, and/or fortified soy beverages
- A variety of protein foods, including seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, legumes (beans and peas), and nuts, seeds, and soy products
- Oils

A healthy eating pattern limits:

- Saturated fats and *trans* fats, added sugars, and sodium

Key Recommendations that are quantitative are provided for several components of the diet that should be limited. These components are of particular public health concern in the United States, and the specified limits can help individuals achieve healthy eating patterns within calorie limits:

- Consume less than 10 percent of calories per day from added sugars^[2] [4]
- Consume less than 10 percent of calories per day from saturated fats^[3] [5]
- Consume less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) per day of sodium^[4] [6]
- If alcohol is consumed, it should be consumed in moderation—up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men—and only by adults of legal drinking age.^[5] [7]

In tandem with the recommendations above, Americans of all ages—children, adolescents, adults, and older adults—should meet the *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* to help promote health and reduce the risk of chronic disease. Americans should aim to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight. The relationship between diet and physical activity contributes to calorie balance and managing body weight. As such, the *Dietary Guidelines* includes a Key Recommendation to

- Meet the *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*.^[6] [8]



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[2] <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/DGAs2010-PolicyDocument.htm>

[3] <https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/executive-summary/#footnote-1>

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