Seafood Health Benefits

- Seafood is the main dietary source of heart-healthy long-chain omega-3 fatty acids, eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA).
- EPA/DHA intake can improve coronary health in adults by decreasing the risk of heart attack, stroke, and hypertension. The American Heart Association recommends 1000 mg per day of EPA/DHA for people with heart disease.
- DHA contributes to cognitive and visual development in infants and children. Experts recommend a daily intake of 200 mg per day for pregnant and breastfeeding women.
- Health organizations and authorities recommend that women who are pregnant or nursing have DHA account for at least 200 mg per day of their omega-3 intake, see reverse page.
- Seafood is low in total fat and saturated fat. Most fish and shellfish contain less than 5% fat, and even the fattier fish, such as mackerel and king salmon, have no more than 15% fat.
- Almost all fish and shellfish contain well under 100 mg of cholesterol per serving, and many of the leaner types of fish have less than 60 mg.
- Selenium is a potent antioxidant found in fish that protects against cell damage and may help to counter any negative effects of mercury.

Seafood in Perspective

- The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend consuming 8 or more ounces of a variety of seafood per week, which provides an average of about 250 mg per day of EPA/DHA.
- Eliminating seafood from the diet can have negative effects on human health.
- Studies have shown that the health benefits of seafood outweigh the risks from contaminants such as traces of mercury or PCBs.
- Most commonly consumed seafoods in the United States are low in mercury.

Health Benefits Linked to Seafood and EPA/DHA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heart</th>
<th>Brain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduces the risk of heart disease</td>
<td>Contributes to neurological development in infants and children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps protect against heart attack and sudden death</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreases blood triglyceride levels</td>
<td>Increases duration of gestation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes</td>
<td>Muscles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributes to visual acuity</td>
<td>Helps build muscles and tissues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Seafood Choices: Balancing benefits and risks, Institute of Medicine of the National Academies (2007)

Seafood Safety

- The main health risk from seafood is exposure to pathogens. To ensure seafood safety, consumers should focus on limiting exposure to bacteria when seafood isn’t stored or cooked properly.
- Cook seafood to an internal temperature of 145°F for at least 15 seconds.
- Seafood can cause an allergic reaction in some people, although patients are often only allergic to a certain species and can safely eat other types of seafood.
- Some consumers should not eat raw or partially-cooked seafood because of the risk for exposure to pathogens, see reverse page.
- Lightly smoked seafood such as lox, is only partially cooked and may still contain pathogens.
- Shellfish toxins are produced during algae blooms. They can cause gastrointestinal and/or neurological problems. Recreational harvesters should check local advisories for warnings.

Guidelines for Consumers

- The chart on the reverse side will help guide consumers to maximize the health benefits of seafood, while minimizing risks for special populations.

http://seafoodhealthfacts.org
# 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 for cardiovascular 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, which includes canned light tuna, salmon, shrimp, pollock, and catfish
- 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 large predatory fish such as shark, swordfish, tilefish, or king mackerel due to higher mercury levels
- Should not eat raw or partially cooked seafood

## 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, as part of the total weekly seafood intake
- Should avoid large predatory fish, such as shark, swordfish, tilefish, or king mackerel due to higher mercury levels
- Young children should not eat raw or partially cooked seafood

## Immuno-compromised individuals and older adults
- Should eat a variety of seafood at least twice per week
- Can reduce their risk for cardiovascular disease by eating seafood regularly
- Can have added benefits from seafood high in EPA and DHA
- Should not eat raw or partially cooked seafood

## All individuals who eat recreationally-caught fish or shellfish
- Some local river systems and inland lakes may contain higher levels of contaminants
- These contaminants can accumulate in the local fish and shellfish populations
- State and tribal environmental programs and the department of health test local waters and issue fish and shellfish consumption advisories
- Before eating recreationally-caught seafood, check with the State Health Department for advisories or visit [http://epa.gov/waterscience/fish/states.htm](http://epa.gov/waterscience/fish/states.htm)

Sources: 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), American Heart Association (AHA), and Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS).

For more information, visit our website:

[http://seafoodhealthfacts.org](http://seafoodhealthfacts.org)