

QuickTakes



Seafood and Your Healthy Heart

Following a healthy diet is a proven way to reduce your risk of heart disease. Pairing healthy eating with a physically active lifestyle will lower that risk even more. Most of us know which types of food can contribute to heart disease. We try to cut down on fatty red meats, fried foods and salty foods. But which foods have been shown to *prevent* heart disease?

Fish has consistently held a prominent place on the heart-healthy menu. The American Heart Association recommends eating fish twice a week. While more and more Americans are eating seafood, few are cooking it at home. This newsletter takes a close look at the health benefits of eating fish and easy ways to prepare it at home.

Seafood, Your Healthy Heart Hero

Seafood is one of the healthiest protein sources. Why? For starters, it doesn't have the saturated fat of red meat. And the fat that's in seafood is the kind you want to eat. A fatty fish still has less fat than the leanest red meat. Better yet, the fat in fish includes omega-3 fatty acids. These unique fats:

- Raise levels of "good" HDL cholesterol.
- Reduce levels of triglycerides, blood fats that raise the risk of heart disease and diabetes.
- Reduce the tendency of blood to form vein-clogging clots.
- Help prevent abnormal heart rhythms, which can lead to sudden fatal heart attack.

The American Heart Association recommends eating fish, particularly fatty fish like salmon or mackerel, at least twice every week. Enjoy it steamed, roasted or grilled, but never fried.

Addition by Subtraction

Seafood reduces the risk of heart disease in several ways. The first is by substitution: Selecting fish or shellfish (instead of red meat or cheese) as your protein source cuts your saturated fat intake. This helps reduce harmful LDL cholesterol, and thus, your risk of heart disease.

Resist the urge to cook your seafood in butter. Doing so adds saturated fat. Avoid introducing trans fats by having it fried. Many vegetable oils used for commercial frying are partially hydrogenated and contain artery-clogging trans fats. Cook seafood at home with small amounts of olive oil.

Additional Benefits

Seafood isn't just good for your heart. Eating fish and shellfish rich in omega-3 fatty acids helps:

- Improve brain and eye development in infants and children.
- Reduce diabetes risk, in part by lowering triglyceride levels. Diets low in omega-3s may also contribute to insulin resistance, a risk factor for diabetes. Omega-3s also help make cell membranes more fluid so they're better able to respond to insulin receptors.
- Boost your body's ability to process the neurotransmitter serotonin, which can help relieve a tendency toward depression. Perhaps a fish dinner is the real "happy meal."

Federal Seafood Advisory

For women who are or may become pregnant, nursing mothers and young children, the benefits of eating fish twice per week are greater than the potential risks. However, four specific fish species (shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish) should be avoided to minimize exposure to mercury. In addition, albacore tuna can be eaten but should be limited to six ounces (one average meal) per week. Also, everyone should check local advisories about

the safety of fish caught by family | and friends in your local lakes, rivers and coastal areas.

Buying Fresh Fish and Shellfish

More and more supermarkets have added fresh fish counters to their stores. The counter person is often a good resource for what to buy and how to prepare it. When buying fresh fish, remember:

- Trust your nose. Fresh fish smells good, like sea air. Walk away from a strong fishy smell or an off odor.
- Fish fillets and steaks should look moist, with no gaps between the segments.
- Net bags of farmed clams, mussels and oysters are displayed on ice in a self-serve table for easy pickup — they're often a good value.
- Shop local when you can. If you live near a coast, try not to choose fish from the opposite coast. Ask the counter person for advice on locally sourced seafood. If you live in the center of the country, local walleye, yellow perch and farmed arctic char are often available.
- Farmed trout, catfish and tilapia are sold nationwide. The methods used to raise them are usually environmentally friendly.
- Be flexible. Many types of fish are interchangeable. Ask the counter person to suggest a good substitute.

The Case for Frozen Seafood

Some of the "freshest" fish at the supermarket can be found in the freezer case. Frozen fish has been processed and flash-frozen soon after being harvested, sometimes within hours. It's likely that the fresh fish on ice at the seafood counter hasn't been swimming for five days or longer.

Not every type of seafood freezes well. Oily fish such as bluefish and mackerel are unsuited to freezing for more than a couple of weeks. Even salmon suffers if frozen for too long. These are some of our frozen favorites:

- Alaskan king or snow crab
- Catfish
- Flounder or sole
- Pacific halibut
- Pollock or Pacific cod
- Sea scallops (choose vacuum-packed)
- Shrimp (American)
- Snapper
- Sockeye salmon
- Squid
- Swordfish
- Tilapia
- Walleye
- Yellowtail tuna

Should I buy wild-caught or farmed seafood?

Farmed isn't necessarily better or worse for the environment than wild-caught seafood. Ask your seller about the seafood's origin. Commercial fishing and fish farming practices are strictly regulated in the U.S. and Canada. Other countries may not follow the same high standards. The [Seafood Watch program](#), sponsored by the Monterey Bay Aquarium, publishes an advisory list that helps consumers select sustainable fish and shellfish.

Catch-of-the-Day Kebabs Serves four

Grilling fish can be challenging. It's hard to gauge the heat of the grill and sometimes the fish falls through the grates. Yet grilled fish appeals to just about everyone, even people who usually don't like fish.

First, choose the right fish. Thin, delicate fillets like sole, flounder and freshwater perch are too fragile for a hot grill. Choose firmer fleshed fish for grilling such as Pacific halibut, swordfish, mahi-mahi, salmon or arctic char.

Season your fish with a favorite spice rub or basic marinade. Oil fish fillets lightly and place on the hot grill skin-side down. Grill for 7 to 10 minutes per inch of thickness. Test for doneness with the tip of thin, sharp knife. Serve with a squeeze of lemon or a splash of hot sauce.



Nutritional info (per serving)

180 Calories	21 g Protein
7 g Fat	5 g Carbohydrate
1 g Saturated fat	6 g Fiber
0 g Trans fat	135 mg Sodium

Ingredients

1 ¼ pounds firm-fleshed white fish such as mahi-mahi, swordfish, Pacific halibut or haddock
1 tablespoon olive oil, plus extra for brushing
Fresh-squeezed juice of 1 lemon
Pinch of cayenne or Aleppo pepper
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
2 red or yellow bell peppers, cut into squares
12 cherry tomatoes
A big handful of fresh sage or basil leaves
Lemon wedges or hot sauce, if desired

Preparation

1. Cut fish into large chunks, about 1 ½ inches square. Try to keep the pieces all the same size. Combine oil, lemon juice, cayenne or Aleppo pepper and parsley in a shallow dish. Season with a little salt and a generous grinding of black pepper. Add the fish chunks and toss to coat. Set aside for 10 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, preheat an outdoor grill or a stovetop grill pan. Soak wooden skewers in water.
3. Thread the skewers, alternating peppers, tomatoes, herb leaves and fish pieces. Brush with olive oil.
4. Grill until the fish is browned, about 10 minutes total, turning as necessary.
5. Serve with lemon wedges or hot sauce.