



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Want to Know More About Seafood?

Below are some of the most common questions about eating seafood and its health benefits. If you have more questions, talk with your doctor. You can download a discussion guide at GetRealAboutSeafood.com to help guide your conversation.

What are the health benefits of seafood?

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that everyone, including pregnant and breastfeeding women, increase the amount of seafood they eat to 2 to 3 servings each week for heart and brain benefits. At a time when people are told to limit many foods, seafood is among the handful of “winning” foods Americans are encouraged to eat more of for their health.

Can pregnant women eat seafood?

Yes! The Dietary Guidelines for Americans encourage pregnant women to eat no less than 8 ounces (2 servings) of seafood each week. Eating seafood 2 to 3 times a week during pregnancy and breastfeeding improves eye and brain development in babies.

How do I prepare seafood?

Start by learning the basics. Find quick and easy recipes at GetRealAboutSeafood.com.

How can I get my family to eat more seafood?

Teach your kids to look forward to eating, to anticipate with pleasure the meal to come. Tell them how much they are going to love their food, as opposed to asking questions like “do you like that?”

For lunches and dinners, make one tasty meal for everyone to eat. This saves time and money while ensuring kids get the same flavorful, wholesome meal as adults.

Use new spices and ingredients to help develop your child’s palate. Working new flavors in to a familiar food — like capers in to canned tuna — is a good way to introduce an exciting taste.

Find recipes for tuna and other seafood at GetRealAboutSeafood.com.

How much seafood should young children eat?

Healthy eating habits that include fish early on help create good habits and health later in life. Young children should eat two servings of seafood each week in age-appropriate portions to match their calorie needs. (See Appendix 7 of the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans for more information.)

Are there certain types of seafood that are “better” than others?

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans suggest eating a variety of seafood. They recommend that adults, including pregnant and breastfeeding women, eat seafood at least twice a week for the powerful health benefits.

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I've heard that seafood is a good source of selenium. What are the benefits of selenium?

New research shows that selenium may balance the naturally-occurring mercury in fish. More studies are needed to better understand this finding. Selenium also has antioxidant properties and most people will get the recommended amounts of selenium from the foods they eat. Natural sources of selenium are fish, nuts, beef and poultry.

What are the top seafood choices high in omega-3s?

The top 10 seafood choices with the highest omega-3s include: farm-raised salmon, herring, wild salmon, mackerel, sardines, trout, anchovies, canned white tuna, mussels and oysters.

Seafood (3 ounces)	EPA milligrams	DHA milligrams	Total long-chain omega-3s
Salmon, farm-raised	587	1238	1825
Herring	1056	751	1807
Salmon, wild	349	1215	1564
Mackerel	369	677	1046
Sardines	402	433	835
Trout	220	575	795
Anchovies	649	99	748
Canned tuna, white	198	535	733
Mussels	235	430	665
Oysters	372	212	584

Is seafood safe?

The answer is YES! Health and nutrition experts, including the expert committee that developed the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, have explored all aspects of seafood and conclude that eating a variety of fish and shellfish is safe.

Don't miss out on the powerful health benefits of seafood because of the misinformation about safety.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend all people eat a variety of seafood 2 to 3 times per week. For the general population there are no types of commercial (store or restaurant purchased) fish or shellfish to limit or avoid. For pregnant women, the experts suggest four rarely eaten fish to avoid during pregnancy and breastfeeding: shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish. Most Americans already do not eat these types of seafood.

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Do I need to be concerned about how much mercury there is in seafood?

Health and nutrition experts, including the expert committee that developed the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, have explored all aspects of seafood and conclude that eating a variety of fish and shellfish provides health benefits that are far too beneficial to give up for any reason.

According to the experts, the general population should eat a variety of seafood 2 to 3 times per week. For pregnant and breastfeeding women, there are only four fish to avoid: shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish. Most women in the U.S. already do not eat these types of seafood. If you are not pregnant or breastfeeding, there are no types of commercial seafood to avoid.

For recreational fish, pay attention to local advisories.

What fish are highest in mercury?

The types of fish Americans regularly like to eat aren't high in mercury. Of the top 10 most popular fish in the U.S. (which make up more than 90 percent of all the seafood Americans eat), none are considered high in mercury.

Pregnant and breastfeeding women are advised to avoid four rarely eaten fish species: shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish. However, most women in the U.S. already do not eat these types of seafood. For everyone else there are no types of commercial seafood to avoid.

What seafood is lowest in mercury?

Ten species of seafood represent the most popular choices in the U.S. (which make up more than 90 percent of all the seafood Americans eat) and none are considered high in mercury. The 10 most commonly-eaten types vary slightly from year to year but most often include: shrimp, canned tuna, salmon, tilapia, pollock, catfish, crab, cod, pangasius and clams. Health and nutrition experts, including the expert committee that developed the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, suggest eating 2 to 3 servings of a variety of seafood each week for health benefits.

Top 10 Commonly-Eaten Seafood Types

2010			2009		2008	
	Species	Lbs	Species	Lbs	Species	Lbs
1	Shrimp	4.0	Shrimp	4.10	Shrimp	4.10
2	Canned Tuna	2.7	Canned Tuna	2.5	Canned Tuna	2.80
3	Salmon	1.999	Salmon	2.04	Salmon	1.84
4	Tilapia	1.450	Pollock	1.454	Pollock	1.34
5	Pollock	1.192	Tilapia	1.208	Tilapia	1.19
6	Catfish	0.800	Catfish	0.849	Catfish	0.92
7	Crab	0.573	Crab	0.594	Crab	0.61
8	Cod	0.463	Cod	0.419	Cod	0.44
9	Pangasius	0.405	Clams	0.413	Flatfish	0.43
10	Clams	0.341	Pangasius	0.356	Clams	0.42
Total All Species		15.8		15.8		16.0

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Can I get my omega-3s from plant sources like flax seed?

Omega-3s from plant sources like flax seed (called ALA), while healthful, do not have the same benefits as the omega-3s found in fish (called EPA and DHA). Fish-based omega-3s are the most powerful at improving heart and brain health.

Is taking a fish oil supplement the same as eating fish?

In short, no. Taking fish oil supplements provides you only with omega-3s — not with any of the other good-for-you nutrients found in fish. Plus, when you eat fish as a meal, you are not eating a higher-fat protein. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that you should choose a variety of whole foods, including fish, to obtain all of the vitamins and minerals you need every day for good health.

Are fish oil supplements safe?

Although the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) believes that taking supplements of up to 3 grams of omega-3 fatty acids from fish per day is generally safe, you should consult your doctor or registered dietitian before taking any supplements.

Unlike the nutrients found in whole foods (which naturally occur in smaller and commonly safe amounts), the nutrients in supplements may be extremely concentrated. This means it can be easier to take more than the recommended amount of a nutrient when you supplement.

Can I include seafood in my gluten-free diet?

Seafood is naturally gluten-free. Sometimes gluten may be added to products during processing. So, choose fish or shellfish without gluten seasonings, coating or breading. Canned tuna packed in oil or water with salt is a great gluten-free food!

Which is better for you: farm-raised or wild fish?

Studies show that, from a nutrition perspective, farm-raised and wild caught fish are essentially comparable. At least half of the fish Americans eat comes from aquaculture, which is an important complement to wild-catch for sustainability, affordability and availability reasons. So for most families, the preference comes down to price and taste.

There is no health reason to recommend one over the other, as farm-raised and wild (as well as domestic and imported) seafood are regulated under and must meet U.S. safety standards.

Is the seafood in my grocery store and restaurant sustainable?

Fish stocks must be monitored to measure for overfishing. When overfishing is discovered for any stock, rules are put in place to help the stock recover. In 2009, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) assessed the status of stocks and concluded that the majority are healthy. That is that 72 percent are under to fully utilized, 19 percent are over utilized, and 8 percent are depleted.