

GET REAL ABOUT  
**SEAFOOD**



**Fact Sheet**

Heart disease is the number one cause of death for women in the United States. Each year, more than 200,000 women die from heart attacks—five times the number of women who die from breast cancer.<sup>1</sup> Eating fish at least twice a week reduces the risk of heart disease by at least 30 percent, whether you already have heart disease or not.

Visit [www.GetRealAboutSeafood.com](http://www.GetRealAboutSeafood.com) to find health information, recipes and tips to help include more fish in weekly meals. It can be as easy as adding canned tuna to your lunchtime salad.

### **Heart Disease Strikes Women Differently Than Men**

- Women are at increased risk for heart disease, with more women dying from heart disease each year than men.<sup>i</sup> In fact, more women than men will die within one year of a first recognized heart attack (23 percent vs 18 percent, respectively).<sup>ii</sup>
- Research shows that women may also be unaware of their risk for heart disease. Although it takes more lives of women than men each year, only 13 percent of women believe that heart disease is their greatest health risk.<sup>iii</sup>

### **The Heart Health Benefits of Fish**

- Deficiencies in omega-3 fatty acids are associated with an increased risk of heart disease. Because the body does not naturally produce omega-3 fatty acids, it relies on food sources to provide the needed omega-3s. Fish, which is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, provides the essential nutrients that may help protect against heart attacks, decrease blood triglyceride levels and increase high-density lipoproteins (HDL), often referred to as “good” cholesterol.
- Research from the American Heart Association demonstrated eating two servings of fish a week contributed to a 36 percent reduction in deaths from a sudden heart attack.<sup>iv</sup>
- Additionally, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) say to “consume seafood for the total package of benefits that seafood provides, including its EPA and DHA content.” In addition to EPA and DHA omega-3s, fish contains nutrients including protein, B vitamins, vitamin D, iron and selenium, all for less than 200 calories per serving and little to no saturated fat.

### **Americans’ Fish Eating Habits**

- It is estimated the average American eats about one serving of fish a week – that means most people need to (at least) double the amount of fish they eat to meet the recommended 2 to 3 servings.<sup>v</sup> Additionally, consumer survey data shows 91 percent of parents with children 12 years and younger say their children aren’t eating fish twice a week.<sup>vi</sup>
- A survey of family practice physicians revealed that 85.2 percent of physicians agree that eating fish provides significant health benefits. Yet, 61 percent recommend incorrect amounts or don’t provide a recommendation for fish consumption to patients.<sup>vii</sup>
- Research suggests most people do not eat the weekly recommended amounts of fish due to lack of knowledge about the health benefits and low confidence in selecting or preparing seafood.<sup>viii</sup>

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**Did You Know?** Taking fish oil supplements is not the same as eating fish. Supplements only provide you with omega-3s – not with any of the other good-for-you nutrients found in fish. Additionally, the majority of studies reviewing the health benefits of omega-3 fatty acids are primarily focused on fish consumption, not fish oil supplements. Public health experts agree that you should choose a variety of whole foods, including fish, to get all of the vitamins and minerals you need every day for good health.

### Get Real About Seafood & Your Health

- In addition to heart health benefits, fish provides a variety of additional benefits for your health – from improving cognitive function to protecting your eyesight. The DGA recommends pregnant and breastfeeding women eat seafood 2 to 3 times per week to help improve their baby’s eye and brain development.
- Visit [www.GetRealAboutSeafood.com](http://www.GetRealAboutSeafood.com) to find health information, recipes and tips to help include more fish in weekly meals. Download a discussion guide to talk with your doctor about increasing the amount of fish you and your family eat.
- Healthcare professionals can visit [www.GetRealAboutSeafood.com](http://www.GetRealAboutSeafood.com) to obtain resources that can be used for patient communication including:
  - Summaries of scientific studies about the health benefits of fish
  - Recent authoritative recommendations, including the latest USDA and HHS Dietary Guidelines for Americans
  - Patient discussion guide on the importance of eating more fish
  - Recipes and nutrition facts

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<sup>i</sup> Lloyd-Jones D, Adams R, Brown T, et al. Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics 2010 Update: A Report from the American Heart Association Statistics Committee and Stroke Statistics Subcommittee. *Circulation*. 2010; 121:e1-e170

<sup>ii</sup> Lloyd-Jones D, Adams R, Brown T, et al. Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics 2010 Update: A Report from the American Heart Association Statistics Committee and Stroke Statistics Subcommittee. *Circulation*. 2010; 121:e1-e170

<sup>iii</sup> Mosca L, Mochari-Greenberger H, Dolor RJ, et al. Twelve-year follow-up of American women’s awareness of cardiovascular disease risk and barriers to heart health. *Circulation*. 2010 Mar; 3(2): 120-7

<sup>iv</sup> Horn, L. V., PhD, RD., McCain, M., MPH, RD., Kris-Etherton, P. M., PhD, RD., Burke, F., MS, RD., Carson, J. A. S., PhD, RD., Champagne, C. M., PhD, RD., Sikand, G., MA, RD. (2008, February). The Evidence for Dietary Prevention and Treatment of Cardiovascular Disease. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 108(2).

<sup>v</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. “Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010.” January 2011. Available at: <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/DietaryGuidelines/2010/PolicyDoc/PolicyDoc.pdf>.

<sup>vi</sup> QSR Magazine. “Seafood Underserved to Kids.” 2009. January 2010. <http://www.qsrmagazine.com/articles/news/story.phtml?id=9407>.

<sup>vii</sup> *Family Practice News*. *Family Practice News* Seafood Survey. March 2012.

<sup>viii</sup> Vision Critical. Consumer Attitudes Towards Fish. November 2011.