



Fish

Friend or Foe?

Do headlines about fish leave you confused? On one hand, thanks in part to their health-promoting omega-3 fatty acids, fish has been credited with everything from making us smarter to decreasing heart disease risk. On the other hand, we see warnings about avoiding fish because of mercury and other toxins. Add sustainability factors like overfishing and bycatch, and it can be difficult to decide if fish should have a place on our plates.

Fish and Health



The most recent Dietary Guidelines recommend that most adults eat 8-12 ounces of seafood per week; an increase from the approximately 3.5 ounces per week we currently eat. Fish offer a unique combination of protein and beneficial fats that has been linked with lower risk of heart disease and improved brain development in babies. New research also suggests that there may be a connection between the omega-3 fatty acids in seafood and lowered risk for developing breast cancer. Certain fish, however, have been found to contain higher than recommended levels of the toxic metal methyl mercury, and shouldn't be eaten frequently. Varying the type of seafood you eat can help reduce your chances of taking in too much mercury.

Fish and Sustainability



The oceans may seem to have an endless supply of fish, but that may not be the case. Advances in how we fish have had unintended consequences for the overall health of ocean life. Issues such as overfishing and bycatch have taken a toll and are threatening the sustainability of our seafood supply. Many fish, however are raised and caught in a way that helps maintain the health of the oceans overall. If you want to consider the sustainability of ocean life when choosing your fish, you can consult guides such as those available through Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch program.

Bottom Line



Current research suggests that the benefit of eating fish in recommended amounts outweighs the potential risks. Being selective in your fish choices can help you maximize the health benefits while reducing potential exposure to toxins and negative impacts on ocean life. The Seafood Watch Super Green List offers suggestions for fish that are both good for you and good for the ocean.



REFERENCES:

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 3. The Super Green List: Connecting Human and Ocean Health. Available at seafoodwatch.org.
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