

## 10 Health Benefits of Seafood

Healthy eating advice in the UK recommends two portions of sustainably sourced fish a week, including one portion of oily fish. However, most adults fall short, consuming just one portion of fish a week on average, and just one portion of oily fish every three weeks!

Seafood is a powerhouse of nutrients like protein, omega-3 fats and a range of vitamins and minerals, that support health in many ways. Here are 10 health reasons to have a seafood-rich diet.

### 1. Supports weight management

White fish and shellfish are low in fat, so a great choice for lowering energy (calorie) intakes in meals without resorting to small portions. This can make it easier to manage weight. Seafood such as pollock, lemon sole, mussels, cod, haddock, plaice, and king prawns contain around 75 kcal per 100g (as a guideline, women need around 2,000kcal and men around 2,500kcal a day to keep their weight steady). Cooking methods with no or little oil or butter such as steaming, grilling, poaching, grilling or air frying help keep calories low.

### 2. Builds strong muscles

All varieties of fish are packed with protein, which is essential for muscle growth and maintenance. Most people get enough protein in their diet but there are times when more may be needed such as during pregnancy or breastfeeding. Protein needs also increase in mid and later life when muscles naturally start to lose their bulk and strength as part of getting older. Plus, protein plays an important part in how the body responds to exercise. For example, many activities such as regular strength and power gym workouts, can increase protein requirements.

### 3. Keeps the heart healthy

All fish contain omega-3 fats. But it's oily fish such as sardines, mackerel, pilchards, and herring that have the most. Omega-3 fats help maintain normal heart function and blood triglyceride levels – good news as raised triglycerides (a type of fat) increase the risk of heart disease. Most seafood is also low in saturated fat. This benefits heart health as reducing intakes of saturates helps to maintain normal blood cholesterol levels. This is significant as around half of all UK adults are thought to have high cholesterol – a major risk factor for heart disease.

#### **4. Helps control blood pressure**

Seafood contains two important nutrients that help to maintain normal blood pressure – omega-3 fats, and potassium, the latter of which is found in many white and oily fish. Around 30% of adults in the UK have high blood pressure, which is a key risk factor for poorer heart health<sup>8</sup>. In fact, around 50% of heart attacks and strokes are linked to high blood pressure.

#### **5. Benefits of the brain**

One of the omega-3 fats in fish – DHA – supports normal brain function and is especially important for brain development in growing babies during pregnancy and breastfed infants. Seafood also supplies a variety of B vitamins that assist with psychological function. Many types are an important source of iodine, too. This nutrient supports cognitive function – our ability to think, remember, make decisions, solve problems, and learn new information. Yet almost 24% of 11–18 year olds, and one in 10 adults up to the age of 65, have very low intakes of iodine, so may be at risk of a deficiency.

#### **6. Supports vision**

Omega-3 fat DHA, found in the largest amounts in oily fish, plays an important part in maintaining vision and contributes to normal development of the eye in growing babies during pregnancy and breastfed infants.

#### **7. Reduces fatigue**

Seafood is a fabulous source of many B nutrients – including vitamins B3, B6 and B12 – that help reduce fatigue and tiredness, thereby supporting energy levels throughout the day.

#### **8. Strengthens immunity**

Seafood contains many nutrients that support immune function, including zinc, iron, copper, selenium, and vitamins B6, B12 and D. Most fish provide vitamin B6 and are an excellent source of vitamin B12 and selenium; oily fish are packed with vitamin D; and many shellfish provide iron, copper, and zinc. Varying the types of fish eaten provides a diverse range of nutrients important for the immune system.

## 9. Supports bone health

Seafood provides protein and phosphorus – two nutrients that are important for maintaining bones. Oily fish are also one of the few foods that are naturally rich in vitamin D, also vital for bones as it helps the body to absorb and use phosphorus and calcium (another bone-friendly nutrient). The benefits of strong, healthy bones shouldn't be underestimated. It's thought that half of women and a fifth of men over the age of 50 will break a bone due to osteoporosis, a condition that causes bones to lose strength and break or fracture more easily.

## 10. Nourishes skin

Many varieties of seafood contain iodine and vitamin B3, while some shellfish contain zinc and copper – all nutrients that help to maintain skin from within.

For more information about the health and nutritional benefits of seafood, search for [Seafood for Health](#) on the Seafish website.