

Fish as your main dish

Nutritionists have been promoting the health benefits of adding fish to your diet for many years, and now studies conducted have uncovered additional evidence that fatty acids found in high amounts in certain kinds of fish are good for your heart.

Fact:

Consumption of fish cut women's risk of dying from heart disease by 20-45%.

High levels of omega-3 fatty acids cut men's risk of dying suddenly by 81%.

It's a low-risk, very inexpensive way to lower the risk of heart disease. Some kinds of fat are bad for you, but the fat in fish actually lowers cholesterol, helps prevent blood clots that form in heart attacks and lessens the chances for the irregular heart beats that cause about 250,000 sudden deaths a year. Mounting evidence suggests there is an inverse association between fish intake and heart disease in women and men.

Good news for fish lovers

More evidence emerges every day to show that fatty acids found in certain fish are heart-healthy nutrients. Eating fish regularly (especially dark-meat fish such as salmon) or taking fish oil supplements reduces the risk of coronary heart disease safely and cheaply for most people.

Numerous studies provide further evidence of the health benefits of omega-3 fatty acids, but there is still not a lot of hard science that explains the specific biological mechanisms affected by omega-3 fatty acids. We do know that a diet rich in these substances results in a reduction of the formation of blood-clotting cells called platelets. Omega-3 fatty acids can also help lower your levels of triglyceride and LDL ("bad") cholesterol, which are fatty substances in the blood that can increase your risk of heart disease.

In addition, the fatty acids found in fish can also decrease your risk of sudden death from heart attack or stroke, irregular heartbeat, blood clots and high blood pressure.



At a glance benefits of eating fish :

Asthma - children who eat fish may be less likely to develop asthma.

Brain and eyes - fish rich in omega 3 fatty acids can contribute to the health of brain tissue and the retina (the back of the eye).

Cancer - the omega 3 fatty acids in fish may reduce the risk of many types of cancers by 30 to 50 per cent, especially of the oral cavity, oesophagus, colon, breast, ovary and prostate.

Cardiovascular disease - eating fish every week reduces the risk of heart disease and stroke by reducing blood clots and inflammation, improving blood vessel elasticity, lowering blood pressure, lowering blood fats and boosting 'good' cholesterol

What kind and how much?

The best sources of the healthy fatty acids are ocean fish such as salmon, tuna and mackerel. But even if you can't find these tasty fish, canned tuna or sardines may work just as well. The following kinds of fish are rich in omega-3 fatty acids:

- Salmon
- Tuna (packed in water not oil)
- Hammour
- Sea Bream
- Nile Perch

Do keep in mind that preparation is also important since baking, broiling or grilling fish is better nutritionally than breading or frying with vegetable oil.

How much fish should you eat?

You don't need to have fish every day of the week. Studies prove that women who only consumed fish once a week experienced a 29 percent decline in their chances of developing heart disease.

Also, if you don't like fish or have allergies to certain kinds of fish, supplements are very effective. Pregnant women and young children should avoid fish high in mercury and should have no more than two servings per week of low-mercury fish and no more than five servings a week of very low-mercury fish.

Moderation is key

The best strategy is to shoot for an overall healthy eating pattern that includes foods from all the major food groups. See if you can eat a variety of fruits, vegetables and grains. Aim for five or more servings of fruits and vegetables and six or more servings of whole grains per day. A Mediterranean-style diet, rich in fruits, vegetables, olive oil and cold water fish is a good model whether you're at risk for heart disease or not.

And don't forget: Fish oil is only a small part of the picture in reducing heart disease. Heart disease is caused by many factors such as smoking, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, obesity and lack of physical exercise.

What's the deal with mercury?

Mercury is released into the air through industrial pollution and ends up in both fresh and salt water. Yuck! Larger, long-lived fish like swordfish, tilefish, king mackerel and shark feed on smaller fish and accumulate the most mercury. Children, women of child-bearing age and pregnant women should avoid all fish that is high in mercury, as mercury can cause a host of problems, including nerve damage.

To get the most omega-3s with the least mercury, try having salmon, any whitefish or sardines.

Note: Sushi lovers beware: tuna contains a substantial amount of mercury and should also be limited.

Should you take a Fish oil supplement?

Fish should be your main source of omega-3 fats, but even people who eat fish frequently may come up short. Fish oil supplements can help you to meet your omega-3 fat goal. The supplements are an option for those who don't like fish or for those who simply want to ensure that they're getting enough Omega 3's.

Final note and warning: Don't take more than 2000 mg of fish oil a day if you overdo it you can end up with internal bleeding.

Having highlighted the various benefits of eating fish here are some easy recipes that the entire family will enjoy!

Recipes

Hammour with herb and lemon butter sauce

For any of your dishes buy the freshest fish you can get your hands on. **Do Not** buy fish that is pre packed or frozen. As this type of fish has been sitting around for a while whereas if it is frozen then it will have lost some of its nutritional value through being frozen!!

Ingredients

2 Hammour fillets
3 oz butter
1 large shallot, thinly sliced
1 small lemon, thinly sliced
2 small sprigs rosemary
1 bunch of Asparagus
Light Soya sauce
Sea salt and black pepper



Method

Preheat the oven to 200°C.

1. Begin by softening the sliced shallot in a little of the butter. Tip this into a roasting tin just big enough to take both Hammour pieces.
2. Now turn the heat up under the pan and add a dot more butter. Quickly caramelize about half of the lemon slices in the foaming butter. Add to the shallots. Spread this mixture over the base of the tin.
3. Place the rosemary on the shallot and lemon mix and put the Hammour on top.
4. Put a couple of lemon slices, a dot of butter and a sprig of parsley on top of each fillet.
5. Splash the Soya Sauce over the fillets until well covered
6. Dot most of the butter over the top, leaving a good knob for later. Season well. Cover the pan with foil and bake for 15 minutes. Remove the foil and put back in the oven for a further 5 minutes.

7. Remove from the oven, gently remove the Hammour onto a board and loosely cover with the foil to keep warm.
8. Strain the liquid through a sieve into a small pan (don't throw the solids away yet). Bring to a rapid boil and reduce down a little.
9. Pick out the rosemary and discard. Stir in the remaining butter into the boiling sauce.
10. Serve the Hammour with some of the lemon and shallot mixture and pour over the lemon butter sauce.
11. Serve with blanched asparagus and a bowl of rice

Green Thai Fishcakes

These Thai fishcakes are great for getting some serious amounts of fish inside your kids as the fish will be well disguised. If you make them nice and crisp they might liken them to chicken nuggets. So get cooking but make sure you do not deep fry as that really does kill the nutritional factor. Try and use the Olive oil spray for all your cooking!

Ingredients

- 1 large shallot, roughly chopped
- 1 clove garlic, roughly chopped
- 2 stalks lemon grass, trimmed and finely chopped
- 2" ginger, peeled and roughly chopped
- Juice of 1 lime
- 2-3 green chillies (or to taste), chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- A tablespoon or so of Thai fish sauce
- 1/2 big bunch coriander - stems and roots (if possible) too
- 1lb white fish
- Oil to shallow fry



Method

1. Preheat the oven to about 170-180°C.
2. Place the shallot, garlic, lemon grass, ginger and chillies into a food processor and whiz as much as possible.
3. Now add the lime juice, Fish Sauce and ground spices. Whiz again.
4. Separate the leaves from the stalks and roots of the coriander.
5. Chop the stems and roots and half of the leaves and add into the food processor. Whiz again to a paste.
6. Now roughly chop the fish (watch out for any bones) and add to the processor. Whiz again on pulse - it's important not to over blend this as the mixture gets too hot and begins to cook.
7. Transfer the paste to a bowl. Roughly chop the remaining coriander leaves and stir into the paste. This mixture can now be set aside for a few hours if required.
8. Get a frying pan hot and add oil to form a thin layer - 1mm deep. Using a dessert spoon, drop a spoonful of mixture into the frying pan and squish down a bit with the back of the spoon to form cake shapes.
9. Don't overfill the pan - you'll probably need to do this in batches. When the cakes are brown and nicely set, flip them over (carefully) and brown on the other side.
10. Line a baking sheet with kitchen paper and transfer the cooked fish cakes to this. Place in the oven to continue cooking while you fry the others. When they're all done, keep them in the oven while you prepare any side dishes.

You can have this with a noodle stir fry (stir fried with more lemongrass, more coriander, yellow pepper, carrot and cashews) or with steamed or boiled rice and a dipping sauce made with lime, fish sauce, a touch of soy, lots of chilli, coriander and a little finely diced carrot. To serve to kids you can serve on burger buns with all the usual frills Here's A Faux Burger with a healthy filling!!