

5 Smart Reasons to

Enjoy Nutrient-Rich Fish and Shellfish

Virtually every set of nutrition guidelines - from the American Heart Association to USDA, recommends eating more fish. The reasons to enjoy fish and shellfish go far beyond refined fish oil supplements. It is almost always better to get your nutrition from nutrient-rich whole fish, from arctic char to whitefish.

1. Omega-3 Fatty acids

These “good” fats support health in many ways, including helping to reduce the risk of heart disease, lower blood pressure, prevent arthritis, and promote brain function. Omega-3s are found in every kind of fish, but are especially high in fatty fish. Good choices include trout, salmon, tuna (canned light), sardines, oysters, crab, and cod.

2. Protein

Ounce-for-ounce most varieties of fish have comparable protein content to lean red meats (beef and pork) and poultry, but more protein than beans or tofu. In a 3-ounce cooked portion, most types have between 20 and 25 grams of high-quality protein. Those with a protein content on the higher end include salmon and tuna.

3. Vitamin D

This fat-soluble vitamin has hit the news big time, because it seems to affect almost every cell in our bodies, not just our bones. While fortified dairy foods, sun exposure, and supplements are the major sources of vitamin D, it is also found in fatty fish. Good sources include salmon, tuna, sardines, and mackerel.

4. Other vitamins

D is just one of many vital vitamins found in fish and shellfish. Several types of fish are an excellent source of vitamin A, including salmon and tuna (which has 43 percent of the recommended amount of A in one serving). Other vitamins found in fish include E and several B-vitamins. Fish and shellfish are generally not good sources of vitamin C.

5. Many minerals

Many fish are good sources of iodine, selenium, phosphorus, and magnesium. Calcium is also found in most fish, but generally at the level of 100 milligrams or less per 3-oz. serving. The exception is canned fish, where the small bones are eaten as part of the flesh. Canned sardines and salmon have 250+ milligrams per serving.