

Keeping your health and wellbeing in the know

My HealthTALK

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Courtesy of Asset Health



FISH CAN HELP YOU LIVE LONGER

As the weather warms up, your appetite changes too, and you might start to crave lighter fare. Think more salads, fewer casseroles. One of the best light foods you can add to your diet this spring is fish.

Fish can offer enormous benefits to your health. Fish has less fat than other protein options, like poultry and beef, and is loaded with omega-3 fatty acids, which have been proven to benefit heart health.

Omega-3s can decrease triglycerides, lower blood pressure, reduce blood clotting, boost immunity and improve arthritis symptoms, according to the Mayo Clinic.

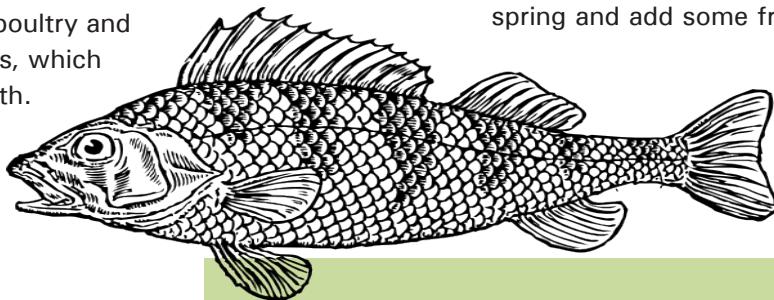
That doesn't mean an order of fish and chips instead of a burger is better for your health. The fish should be prepared by broiling, grilling or other methods that won't add fat. Some types of fish are better than others, such as salmon and herring, which are excellent options as they have the highest omega-3 content. In general, freshwater fish have fewer omega-3s than their salt water counterparts. Adults should have at least two 3-ounce servings per week. Women who are pregnant, may become pregnant or are breastfeeding, and children under 12 should limit (but not eliminate) fish consumption and look for options low in mercury.

A study conducted by the University of Washington and Harvard School of Public Health published in *Annals of Internal Medicine* shows that eating fish regularly may help you live longer. The study followed more than 2,700 adults 65 years of age or older for 16 years. Participants with higher levels of blood omega-3 fatty acids were found to have a 27% decreased mortality rate from all causes and a 35% decrease in mortality rate from heart disease.

Fish may also prevent your children from developing allergies. A Swedish study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that children who consumed at least two servings of fish monthly from

the time they turned one were up to 75% less likely to have allergy symptoms, including those associated with seasonal and indoor allergies and eczema. Be sure to consult your physician before changing your child's diet.

Make a step in a healthy direction this spring and add some fresh fish to your diet.



WHAT ABOUT MERCURY?

Fish is great for your health, but could the potentially negative effects of mercury in the fish you eat outweigh the benefits? Generally, the answer is no, but there are ways to reduce the amount of mercury in your diet and still eat fish.

Some mercury occurs in the environment naturally, but it can also be introduced as a pollutant from industrial waste. Adults are less susceptible to the negative effects of mercury than children or pregnant women, but everyone can take steps to reduce their intake.

State governments report high levels of mercury in fish, and other environmental warnings, through their websites. It's a good idea to check with your state before you decide what type of fish to buy.

Some varieties of fish have higher levels of mercury. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should avoid four types of seafood: shark, tilefish, swordfish and king mackerel. When choosing canned tuna, go for light instead of albacore. Surprisingly, albacore tuna has a higher mercury level.

Eating with the Seasons

Your supermarket probably carries a wide variety of produce all year, even fruits and vegetables that aren't in season in your area. Every fruit and vegetable, however, has a growing season when it is better than any other time of year. Vegetables and fruits sold in season will cost less and will taste their best. Just like your car starts losing value as soon as you drive it off the lot, vegetables and fruit begin losing nutritional value the moment they are picked. Produce that is not in season has to travel farther than what is seasonal, so it has more time to lose its nutrients, get damaged in transit, and be exposed to more of the elements.

Shopping at a farmers market in your area is a great way to discover new produce to try and get the best of what's available. You will not only be helping your and your family's health, but also the environment and the local economy. The produce at a farmers market is often sold the very day that it is harvested. It can also be easier to find organic produce at a lesser cost. If you have children, letting them learn about the food they are eating from the people who grow it can make them more inclined to eat it.



Here is a list of some of the **BEST FRUITS and VEGETABLES** spring has to offer:

- Strawberries
- Sweet cherries
- Asparagus
- Peas
- Radishes
- Fava beans
- Apricots
- Artichokes
- Rhubarb
- Morel Mushrooms
- Lettuces
- New potatoes
- Peas
- Scallions
- Spinach

Spring Clean for Better Health

Spring cleaning not only makes your house look better, it can actually make you feel better. May is Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month, and it's a great time to get rid of the built up grime that collects during the winter months and breathe easier.

For those who suffer from allergies and asthma, a mask should be worn during cleaning. Cleansers that do not have added fragrance are also a good idea. In fact, sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) and white vinegar can often take the place of harsh chemical cleaners.

Always work in a well-ventilated area. When disinfecting surfaces, be sure to follow the product instructions so that germs can be killed when surfaces are cleaned and check for toxic ingredients. Be careful not to mix two different cleaners; this can produce harmful fumes.

Visit the American Cleaning Institute website at www.cleaninginstitute.org for some helpful tips on spring cleaning your home.

