



LESSON 2

HEALTH BENEFITS

INTRODUCTION

Seafood is an essential part of a healthy lifestyle. The benefits of seafood are so great that the 2010 government guidelines for American recommend that average Americans increase their seafood intake to at least 8 ounces a week, or about two servings. Smaller amounts of seafood are recommended for children. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans is concerned about the health of the American population. Poor diet and physical inactivity are the most important factors contributing to an epidemic of overweight and obesity affecting men, women, and children in all segments of our society. Even in the absence of overweight, poor diet, and physical inactivity are associated with major causes of morbidity and mortality in the United States. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines are intended for Americans ages 2 years and older, including those at increased risk of chronic disease.

In addition to the health benefits for the general public, this is the first time the Dietary Guidelines have recommended a specific amount of seafood to eat, the nutritional value of seafood is of particular importance during fetal growth and development, as well as in early infancy and childhood.

Studies have shown the omega-3 fatty acids found in a variety of seafood reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. The federal government specifically mentions benefits of eating fish to “reduce the risk of mortality from cardiovascular disease.” Research has revealed omega-3s can help decrease triglyceride levels, slightly lower blood pressure, decrease the growth rate of plaque in blood vessels, and decrease the risk of heart arrhythmias, which are disturbances in the rhythm or rate of the heartbeat.

Omega-3 fatty acids also contribute to healthy neurological development of children. Seafood is associated with improved infant health outcomes, such as visual and cognitive development.

Studies are the continuing on the effects of omega-3s to treat mood disorders, such as depression, to reduce the risk of Alzheimer’s disease, and to help reduce joint pain.

Seafood can make a significant contribution to the nutrient needs of all consumers, especially growing children and the elderly. We have known for years that seafood is a good source of protein and a low calorie food. It is low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol. Health experts agree seafood is an important part of a healthy, balanced diet.