

## **Fish and sustainable sources**

### **Why is it important to us?**

Fish is an important source of many nutrients, including protein and long-chain omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (n-3 PUFAs), as well as several vitamins and minerals including selenium, iodine, potassium, vitamin D and B vitamins.

Population studies (a study of a group of individuals taken from the general population who share a common characteristic, such as age, sex, or health condition) have shown fish to have protective factors against conditions such as cardiovascular disease (CVD), including stroke, as well as cancer. There is also the potential of when eaten during pregnancy or in early childhood, fish can decrease the risk of eczema or asthma. However this is still being investigated.

### **Omega-3 Fats**

Omega-3 fats are a type of polyunsaturated fatty acid, and these are **essential** fats. This means the body cannot make them, so we must get them from our diet. Fish is a rich source of Omega-3, particularly oily fish.

They have numerous benefits for the body and are important components of cell membranes. Additionally, Omega-3 contributes to normal vision, brain and central nervous system development in children.

### **Types of fish**

Different types of fish and shellfish provide different nutrients.

Oily fish are high in Omega-3 fats and a good source of vitamin D. These include herring, pilchards, salmon, sardines, sprats, trout and mackerel. Fresh and canned tuna however do not count as oily fish.

White fish are low in fat, including cod, haddock, plaice and pollock. Sea bass, sea bream, turbot and halibut, can also contain Omega-3 fats but at lower levels than oily fish.

Shellfish, low in fat and a source of selenium, zinc, iodine and copper. These include prawns, mussels, scallops, squid and langoustine. Some types of shellfish, such as mussels, oysters, squid and crab, are also good sources of long-chain omega-3 fatty acids, but again they do not contain as much as oily fish.

### **How much should I eat?**

Everyone should try to eat at least two portions of sustainably sourced fish per week, one of which should be oily fish. The size of these portions differs by age:

<b>Age</b>	<b>One portion size</b>
18 months to 3 years	¼ - ¾ small fillet or one to three tablespoons

4 to 6 years	½ - 1 small fillet or two to four tbsp
7 to 11 years	1 - 1 ½ small fillets or three to five tbsp
12 years to adult	140g (5 oz) fresh fish or one small can oily

## **Fish and Sustainability**

To ensure there are enough fish to eat now and in the future, we should try to eat a wide variety of fish and to buy fish from sustainable sources.

‘Sustainable’ fish or shellfish are those that have been caught in a way that the fish population can remain productive and healthy and will allow fish stocks to be replenished. Fishing must also be managed carefully so that other species and habitats are not unnecessarily damaged.

## **What would happen if we don’t fish sustainably?**

If too many fish are caught and there are not enough adults to breed and sustain a healthy population, this is said to be overfishing.

Overfishing affects seafood supplies as it can change the size of the remaining fish, as well as breaking food chains if they become unavailable. It also impacts livelihoods as fishing is the main livelihood for millions of people around the world.

Also, if fishing is not done in safe ways by using explosives or chemicals, then the surrounding areas can become contaminated and affect the marine environment.

All of this leads to fish species becoming endangered and therefore protected so they do not become extinct.

## **So what can you do?**

As shown, fish is a rich source of nutrients and an important component in our diets.

However, it is as important to eat sustainably. To do this you can look out for ecolabels on certified fish products at the supermarket, such as the blue Marine Stewardship Council logo. This is a sign that the fish are from a sustainable source, and have been handled with care.



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