

Fish for Life

Good nutrition is important at any age. Eating the right foods can help you to stay healthy, energetic and may help to prevent some diseases. You may be eating less now than you did when you were younger but you still need the same amount of nutrients. For this reason, it is important to make sure you eat a wide variety of foods and enjoy a balanced diet.

How can fish help?

Fish is a rich source of protein and many of the vitamins and minerals that you need for good health. Fish also has many other benefits including helping to protect against heart disease and a range of other illnesses.

<i>Protein</i>	Protein is used by your body for repair and for healthy muscles, skin and hair. All fish, white, oil-rich and shellfish contain protein. You need to eat some protein-rich foods everyday.
<i>Vitamin D</i>	<p>Oil-rich fish are an excellent source of vitamin D. Our bodies normally make this vitamin when exposed to sunlight, but if you cover up when you go out or if you are not in the sun too often, your levels of vitamin D can be quite low. Vitamin D is needed for healthy bones as it helps your body to absorb calcium. Having a low level of vitamin D can lead to osteoporosis (brittle bone disease) or osteomalacia (softening of the bones). Your need for vitamin D increases as you get older so it is important that you eat enough to keep your bones healthy.</p> <p>Oil-rich fish such as mackerel, herring, salmon and trout are all rich and inexpensive sources of vitamin D with some fish providing your full recommended daily amount (RDA) in one portion.</p>
<i>Selenium</i>	Fish is also an excellent source of selenium which helps to protect against heart disease and certain cancers. Selenium is needed for a healthy immune system and metabolism. All types of fish including cod, whiting, crab and prawns contain selenium.
<i>Calcium</i>	Healthy bones need lots of calcium for strength. Your need for calcium doesn't change as you get older. More than 1/3 of Irish women don't include enough calcium in their diet, so it is very important that you ensure you are getting your recommended daily amount (RDA). Dairy products are the main source of calcium but fish like sardines and oysters can be an excellent top-up source. Tinned salmon can also provide some calcium if you eat the softened bones as well as the fish.

Fish is also a source of zinc, which is needed for a healthy immune system, iodine, needed for a healthy metabolism and vitamins A and B12

Omega 3 fats

Oil-rich fish are an important source of omega 3 fats. Your body cannot make these special fats so you need to eat foods containing omega 3 everyday. Omega 3 fats help to protect the body from heart disease and may play a role in helping to prevent other diseases such as Alzheimer's and some types of cancer. Oil-rich fish is one of the few foods to provide omega 3 fats and it is a source of two of the most important types of omega 3 - EPA and DHA. Omega 3 fats can be found in small amounts in some other foods but the body has difficulty turning these fats into the EPA and DHA that it needs. It is recommended that we eat oil-rich fish at least once a week to make sure we are getting enough omega 3.

Omega 3 and heart disease

Omega 3 fats are strongly associated with protection against heart disease especially in people with risk factors for heart disease, such as high blood cholesterol or raised triglyceride levels, and people already diagnosed with heart disease.

One study showed a 52% lower risk of heart attack when people ate fish at least once a week.

Omega 3 and arthritis

For years people have taken fish oils to help relieve the symptoms of arthritis. Many rheumatoid arthritis sufferers find some relief when they include more omega 3 fats in their diet or take them as supplements. Other research suggests that including omega 3 fats in your diet may help to prevent osteoarthritis (where cartilage in the joints has worn down) by protecting the cartilage, but more research is needed.



Fish is rich in nutrients and is easy to cook and digest, making it an ideal addition to your everyday diet. Try to have fish at least twice a week and include one oil-rich fish at least once a week.



Fish in a parcel

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 4 x white fish or salmon portions
 - 1 courgette
 - Handful of cherry tomatoes
 - 1 yellow pepper
 - 2 cloves garlic
 - Basil leaves (optional) – torn
 - Salt and freshly milled black pepper
- } Roughly chopped

Method:

- Place chopped vegetables in the centre of a sheet of foil. Arrange fish on top. Season with a little salt and pepper.
- Fold foil loosely to make a parcel.
- Place in a pre-heated oven 200°C/400°F/ gas mark 6 for 15-18 minutes.
- Open foil and slide the fish and vegetables on to a plate.

To Serve:

Serve with baked potato.



Mackerel with citrus dressing

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 8 x mackerel fillets
- Citrus dressing:
 - 4 tablespoons orange juice
 - 2 tablespoons lemon juice
 - 2 tablespoons lime juice
 - 4 tablespoons olive oil

Method:

- Pre-heat grill.
- Grill fish, skin side up under a medium heat for 5-7 minutes, or until cooked through.
- Meanwhile, whisk the juices and olive oil together.
- Place the mackerel on a warmed plate and drizzle with citrus dressing.

To Serve:

Serve with potatoes and seasonal vegetables or salad.



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