

New government dietary guidelines recommend eating more seafood

Posted: Tuesday, February 01, 2011

SEAFOOD.COM NEWS [seafoodnews.com] - February 1, 2011 - The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, released yesterday, named seafood among the handful of foods Americans should eat more of because of its heart and brain benefits.

At a time when people are told to limit many foods because they contribute to the obesity epidemic and other widespread medical conditions like heart disease, a thorough review of dozens of seafood studies shows Americans should increase the amount of seafood they eat to at least 8 to 12 ounces (two to three servings) each week.

The Dietary Guidelines specifically clear up persistent consumer confusion by saying pregnant and breastfeeding women should eat at least 8 and up to 12 ounces (two to three servings) of seafood each week to boost babies' brain and eye development. Pregnant and breastfeeding women currently eat less than two ounces of seafood per week.

'Seafood is nutrient-rich, meaning it packs healthy nutrients including omega-3s into less than a couple hundred calories per 4-ounce serving,' said Dr. Louis Aronne, Internist and Director of Comprehensive Weight Control Program at Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center and Clinical Professor of Medicine at Cornell University. 'Omega-3 deficiency is a leading dietary contributor to preventable deaths, mostly from heart disease, in America. So it's about time that the benefits of seafood are more clearly recognized in the Dietary Guidelines.'

According to the National Fisheries Institute (NFI), key takeaways about seafood from the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, upon which Federal food and nutrition education programs like the iconic food diagram are based, include the following:

- * 'Increase the amount and variety of seafood consumed by choosing seafood in place of some meat and poultry.' Pg. 34
- * 'An intake of 8 or more ounces per week (less for young children), about 20% of total recommended intake of protein foods of a variety of seafood is recommended.' Pg. 39
- * Eat 'at least 8 and up to 12 ounces of a variety of seafood each week' during pregnancy and breastfeeding to improve eye and brain development in babies. Pg. 39
- * 'Moderate evidence shows that consumption of about 8 ounces per week of a variety of seafood, which provide an average consumption of 250 mg per day of EPA and DHA, is associated with reduced cardiac deaths among individuals with and without pre-existing cardiovascular disease.' Pg. 39

Current Seafood Consumption Insufficient to Realize Health Benefits

According to NOAA data, the average American eats about one serving of seafood a week. And, the FDA estimates pregnant women eat less than half a serving. Additionally, consumer survey data from SeaPak shows 91 percent of parents with children 12 years and younger say their children eat seafood less than twice a week. Misinterpretation of FDA advice may contribute to these low consumption numbers. The new Dietary Guidelines provide further support for a call

to update FDA advice, which experts say 'may be inadvertently causing harm.'

'Seafood has gotten lost in the American diet and as a result, we are missing out on the meaningful health benefits that the omega-3s in seafood provide,' said Jennifer McGuire, MS, RD, manager of nutrition communication for the National Fisheries Institute. 'The new Dietary Guidelines provide the scientific rationale for the health benefits and now we need to focus on making fish and shellfish a more regular part of our meals.'
