

Contact: Andrea Albersheim
andrea@seafoodnutrition.org
703-740-9278

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Dietary Guidelines Committee Recommends Moms & Kids Eat More Seafood for Brain Health

Women should eat seafood before, during and after pregnancy, and beginning at 6 months of age complementary foods should prioritize seafood, according to DGAC Scientific Report

The 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) released its [final scientific report](#) that will serve as the foundation for the development of the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The DGAC final report, comprised of 835 pages, has positive findings for seafood consumption.

- Seafood consumption before pregnancy may be related to reduced risk of gestational diabetes and hypertensive disorders.
- Consumption during pregnancy may be related to reduced risk of hypertensive disorders and preterm birth and better cognitive development and language and communication development in children.
- Women who are lactating should continue to consume seafood at the same amounts recommended during pregnancy.
- Provide good sources of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, such as seafood, beginning at ages 6 to 12 months, and prioritize seafood for toddlers ages 12 to 24 months.

From the 2020 DGAC Final Report Executive Summary

- *The Committee's reviews also suggested that seafood intake before pregnancy as part of a healthy dietary pattern, particularly intake of fish high in omega-3 fatty acids, may be related to reduced risk of gestational diabetes and hypertensive disorders, and that consumption during pregnancy may be related to reduced risk of hypertensive disorders and preterm birth and better cognitive development and language and communication development in children. Therefore, the Committee concurred with existing recommendations that women who are pregnant should consume at least 8 and up to 12 ounces of a variety of seafood per week from choices that are lower in methylmercury and higher in omega-3 fatty acids.*
- *...the Committee's review suggested that seafood choices are important components of a healthy dietary pattern for women. Therefore, the Committee concurred with existing recommendations that women who are lactating should continue to consume seafood at the same amounts recommended during pregnancy.*
- *The Committee also conducted a review of relationships between seafood consumption during childhood and adolescence and risk of CVD and neurocognitive outcomes during the lifespan. Available evidence was insufficient to make a conclusion about seafood intakes during these life stages and risk of later CVD or neurocognitive outcomes. However, no adverse associations were reported.*

- *For toddlers ages 12 to 24 months who are fed neither human milk nor infant formula, the Committee was able to establish a recommended Food Pattern. The Pattern allows for a variety of nutrient-rich animal-source foods, including meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, and dairy products, as well as nuts and seeds, fruits, vegetables, and grain products, prepared in ways that are developmentally appropriate for this age. Key aspects to emphasize include choosing potassium-rich fruits and vegetables, prioritizing seafood, making whole grains the predominant type of grains offered, and choosing oils over solid fats.*

“We are pleased to see the 2020 DGAC provide resounding support for seafood consumption for mom, kids and adults through the lifespan,” said Dr. Tom Brenna, chair of Seafood Nutrition Partnership’s (SNP) Scientific and Nutrition Advisory Council and member of the 2015 DGAC. “The 2020 DGAC confirms the strength of the extensive scientific evidence on the importance of seafood in the diets of pregnant women to support their child’s brain development.”

The next step is for the USDA and HHS staff to translate the DGAC scientific report into the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025.

Expert scientists, including many from SNP’s Scientific & Nutrition Advisory Council followed the DGAC’s systematic review process to answer the two seafood questions on brain development and [published the findings in a peer-reviewed journal](#) in October 2019. They found that mothers who ate seafood during pregnancy had babies with average 7.7 IQ points higher than moms who did not.

The findings from this systematic review found the benefits to neurocognitive development began at the lowest amounts of seafood consumed in pregnancy (one serving or about 4 oz. per week) and some studies looked at greater than 100 oz. per week. No adverse effects of seafood consumption were found for neurocognition in any of the 44 publications. The studies in the systematic review did not identify specific species but rather general seafood consumption.

SNP has been following seafood-specific questions for development of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025 closely and have submitted public comments and supported the efforts of many leading researchers in the field of dietary fats to emphasize the latest science.

“For the past two years, Seafood Nutrition Partnership and its team of scientific advisors have been following and submitting comments to the DGAC, having reviewed the evidence that seafood consumption has positive implications for the health of all Americans,” said Linda Cornish, president of SNP. “The 2020 DGAC Scientific Report and its findings of favorable impacts of seafood for cognitive development and language and communication development in children is great news. Since no evidence emerged to support a maximum intake level or any negative impact, we hope the limit on quantity and species of seafood is lifted in the final guidelines to provide a clear, evidence-based message to Americans on seafood consumption.”

These findings from the DGAC improve upon the [current Dietary Guidelines](#), which mentions infant outcomes but not specifically cognitive: “Consumption by women who are pregnant or breastfeeding of at least 8 ounces per week from seafood choices that are sources of DHA is associated with improved infant health outcomes.”

About Seafood Nutrition Partnership

Seafood Nutrition Partnership (SNP) is a national non-profit with a mission to inspire a healthier America by empowering seafood consumption as part of a balanced diet. SNP is addressing the country’s public health crisis through education programs that inspire Americans to incorporate

more seafood and omega-3s into their diets for improved health as per USDA/HHS Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the American Heart Association, and many other leading health organizations. For more information, visit seafoodnutrition.org or follow @Seafood4Health and #Seafood2xWk on social media.