

Guide to Communicating the Benefits of Fish and Seafood in Pregnancy

KEY MESSAGES TO KNOW (FOR PROVIDERS/PROFESSIONAL GROUPS):

- Seafood is needed for the best possible brain development in babies. Seafood is one of the only foods naturally rich in the omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA, which promote brain development.
- The [2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#)¹ encourages pregnant women to eat 2-3 seafood meals a week to boost babies' brain development.
- The newly released, 2017 [FDA](#) advice² urges pregnant women, breastfeeding moms, and young children to eat more seafood.
- The new advice² recommends that pregnant and breastfeeding moms eat at least 2-3 servings (or 8-12 ounces) of a variety of seafood each week, including popular options like salmon, canned tuna, shrimp, tilapia, and crab. The average pregnant woman in the U.S. eats less than 2 ounces of seafood a week.
- Pregnant and breastfeeding moms should aim to eat a variety of seafood each week to maximize nutrient intake. The seafood found in U.S. grocery stores and restaurants offer options that are both healthy for mom and baby; and safe to eat during pregnancy.
- Limiting seafood during pregnancy and early childhood can mean missing out on critical nutrients that would have a positive impact on growth and development in children and heart and brain health for adolescents and adults³.

KEY MESSAGES TO SHARE (WITH PATIENTS AND FAMILIES):

- Eating seafood during pregnancy is important for you and your baby. Seafood is full of nutrients needed for your baby's growth and brain development, including healthy omega 3-DHA, vitamin D, selenium, and iodine.
- Eat 2-3 servings of a variety of seafood weekly for your baby's growth and brain development. Young children should eat seafood at least once or twice a week.
- Nutrients in seafood help mom's brain, heart, and mood too.
- All varieties of store-bought and restaurant seafood* are safe to eat during pregnancy - except shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy, tilefish, king mackerel and bigeye tuna (found in sushi).

* For seafood caught by family and friends, check with local advisories.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- ✓ **Consumer-friendly language is key.** Clear, consumer-friendly language about the benefits of eating fish for mom and baby is imperative for helping pregnant women understand they can – and should – enjoy fish and seafood during pregnancy.
- ✓ **Simple is better.** Messaging must be simple, empowering, and easily understood. New language must inspire confidence about eating fish and seafood during pregnancy.
- ✓ **Empower providers to educate his/her patients.** Clear, positive and action-oriented language has the power to inspire healthcare professionals to speak confidently to patients about fish and seafood during pregnancy, and effectively educate pregnant women.

Sources:

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. December 2015. Available [here](#).
2. FDA. *Eating Fish: What Pregnant Women and Parents Should Know*. January 2017. Available [here](#).
3. FDA. *A Quantitative Assessment of the Net Effects on Fetal Neurodevelopment from Eating Commercial Fish*. May 2014. Available [here](#).