

# THE TRUTH ABOUT SALMON

IS SALMON GOOD FOR YOUR BODY?



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## INTRODUCTION

Of all the fish you can buy in your local supermarket, salmon is the one that gets the most attention as a healthy addition to your diet. You probably know that salmon is a good source of Omega-3 essential fatty acid, which your body needs to be healthy.



Salmon is widely available – but not all salmon is created equal. There's a big difference in nutritional value between farmed salmon and wild-caught salmon.

The real question is this: is salmon a good addition to your diet? How much do you need to eat to get the health benefits? In this book, we'll answer both questions.

## THE HISTORY OF SALMON

The word "salmon" refers to any variety of fish in the *Salmo* genus or the *Oncorhynchus* genus. It derives from the Latin word *salmo*, which became *samoun* in Middle English. Eventually it evolved to the word we know today.

Salmon live in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. In the Atlantic, they can be found in the cold Northern waters around New England and into Canada. They also live along much of the European coast and have been found as far south as Spain.

Pacific salmon have similar reach. The Pacific Northwest in the United States is the heart of the salmon fishing industry in the United States, with rich populations along the Oregon and Washington coasts and in Alaska.

Salmon live near the coast because they spawn in fresh water streams. They battle their way upstream to spawn. Historically, this upstream trip was the best time to catch salmon for food. Indigenous tribes who relied on salmon for food would watch for them and catch them with dip nets as they struggled against the current.

Traditionally – and before refrigeration – the people who ate salmon would cure it. They dried it or smoked it so that it would keep year-round. It provided much-needed protein and healthy fat. Today, Americans consume approximately 400,000 tons of salmon every year. The wild population of Atlantic salmon has dwindled greatly due to overfishing. Most of the Atlantic salmon you see in stores today is farmed salmon.

By contrast, Pacific salmon are more abundant and much of the Pacific salmon sold in stores is wild-caught. Some of the most popular varieties of salmon are sockeye, Chinook salmon, and Coho salmon.

One key difference between farmed salmon and wild-caught salmon is the color of the flesh. Wild salmon has a coral color. Farmed salmon are a very pale pink by comparison, although some farmed salmon are fed carotenoids to give them a more attractive color.

## WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS BOOK

The purpose of this short eBook is to give you the information you need to decide whether salmon is a healthy addition to your diet. The topics we'll cover include:

- The nutritional content of salmon
- The health benefits of salmon
- Whether adding salmon to your diet can prevent disease and keep you healthy
- The pros and cons of eating salmon
- The key differences between salmon and salmon oil

We'll also talk about how much salmon to add to your diet. By the time you're done reading, you'll have the information you need to make an informed decision about salmon.

Let's get started.

## HEALTH BENEFITS OF SALMON

Salmon is touted as a healthy addition to your diet, but do you know why? Even if you've heard a lot about healthy fat and Omega-3, you might not know what other nutrients are in salmon and how they can potentially benefit your health.



In this chapter, we'll review the nutritional information about salmon in detail. We'll also run through some of the potential health benefits of eating salmon.

### NUTRITIONAL BREAKDOWN OF SALMON

The nutritional breakdown of salmon is a good starting place for an evaluation of its health benefits. Here's the big picture view. A 4-ounce serving of salmon contains:

- 185 calories
- 31.7 grams of protein
- 5.5 grams of fat

Salmon is naturally sugar-free and carbohydrate-free. You may already know that salmon is an excellent source of Omega-3 essential fatty acid, but let's run through the other key nutrients in salmon and talk about why they're important.

### Omega-3

Salmon is a rich source of Omega-3 essential fatty acid. Omega-3 is called essential because our bodies can't produce it. That means we need to get it in our diets to be healthy.

One serving of salmon contains 2,583 milligrams of Omega-3. It's important to note that farmed salmon is fattier than wild-caught salmon, but the fat is often not Omega-3 because farmed salmon is fed corn and soybeans, while wild-caught salmon eat other fish that are also rich in Omega-3.

Omega-3 is important for heart health, brain development, brain function, and vision. There's also evidence to suggest that it can help combat depression and anxiety and reduce the symptoms of ADHD in children.

### B Vitamins

Salmon is a rich source of several important B vitamins, including:

- Vitamin B1 (thiamin) – 18% of the recommended daily intake (RDI)
- Vitamin B2 (riboflavin) – 29% of the RDI
- Vitamin B3 (niacin) – 50% of the RDI
- Vitamin B5 (pantothenic acid) – 19% of the RDI
- Vitamin B6 – 47% of the RDI
- Vitamin B9 (folate) – 7% of the RDI
- Vitamin B12 – 51% of the RDI

To give you an idea of how important these vitamins are, let's review some of their health benefits:

- Thiamin is important for glucose metabolism, which allows your body to use carbohydrates as fuel, as well as heart, muscle, and nerve function.
- Riboflavin helps your body break down food and absorb essential nutrients.
- Niacin supports healthy heart function and brain function. It also may ease the symptoms of arthritis and regulate cholesterol and triglyceride levels.
- Pantothenic acid supports healthy liver and nervous system function. It also plays a role in the manufacture of red blood cells and hormones.
- Vitamin B6 plays a role in protein, fat, and carbohydrate metabolism, as well as in the manufacture of red blood cells and neurotransmitters.
- Folate is essential to make DNA and assist in cell division and is especially important for pregnant women and nursing mothers.
- Vitamin B12 helps keep your blood cells and nervous system health. It also plays a role in manufacturing DNA and can prevent anemia.

When it comes to B vitamins, salmon is a nutritional powerhouse.

### Selenium

Selenium is an essential mineral that plays a crucial role in healthy thyroid function. It also protects your bones and its powerful anti-inflammatory properties mean it can guard against inflammation and cell damage.

A single serving of salmon – particularly wild-caught salmon – can give you 60% or more of the RDI of selenium. Keep in mind that people need more selenium as they get older, and that it's an important mineral for pregnant and nursing mothers.

### Vitamin C

Vitamin C has powerful antioxidant qualities and, as such, is essential for supporting healthy immune function. It also plays a role in supporting heart function, preventing eye disease, fighting inflammation, and keeping your skin looking young and healthy.

You probably already know that Vitamin C can help ward off colds and infections.

## Potassium

Potassium is a mineral that conducts electricity and plays an essential role in many bodily functions and processes. For example, it helps regulate water retention and can lower your blood pressure.

Getting enough potassium in your diet can also reduce your risk of having a stroke and protect you against osteoporosis and kidney stones.

## Vitamin D

Vitamin D is known as the sunshine vitamin. There are few foods that are naturally high in Vitamin D, although flour, cereal, and milk are often enriched with Vitamin D. Salmon is an exception.

The Vitamin D in salmon helps the body absorb calcium and can keep your bones strong and healthy.

## **WILD CAUGHT VS. FARMED SALMON**

When you go to the supermarket to buy salmon, you may notice that there are wild-caught and farmed salmon available. There are some key differences you should be aware of.

1. Wild-caught salmon eat a natural diet of other fish, which are rich in Omega-3 and other nutrients. By contrast, farmed salmon are fed a high-fat, high-protein, processed feed to help them grow quickly.
2. Farmed salmon have more calories and more fat than wild-caught salmon – which, again, is thanks to their diet.
3. Farmed salmon have slightly more Omega-3 than wild-caught salmon, but they also have far more Omega-6. It's important to eat Omega-3 and Omega-6 in a one-to-one ratio. Wild salmon has 6 times as much Omega-6 as Omega-3. Getting too much Omega-6 can cause inflammation.
4. Both wild-caught and farmed salmon may contain mercury. Some studies have shown that wild Atlantic salmon have more mercury than farmed Atlantic salmon, but that really depends on the environment.
5. Farmed salmon are often given antibiotics and other human-made drugs, and wild salmon are not exposed to those things.

6. Farmed salmon may be more prone to disease than wild-caught salmon because they are kept in close quarters and fed a diet that's not what they would eat in the wild.

Those are the nutritional differences. You should also know that wild-caught salmon tends to be more expensive than farmed salmon because of the work and time involved in catching it.

Overall, wild-caught salmon is healthier to eat than farmed salmon in most cases. For people who are concerned about antibiotics, it's the better choice.

## WEIGHT CONTROL

Salmon may be useful for weight control. There are limited studies available, but salmon is a high-protein, high-fat food that can help you feel satiated for a long time when compared to other foods.

A 2007 study found that overweight men who included fish in their diets lost a little more weight than men who ate a diet with no fish. However, a later study found no real difference.

The likelihood is that the healthy fat content of salmon can be helpful for people who are trying to lose weight when it's part of a balanced diet. It's not a magic weight loss cure, but it is a healthy food for weight loss.

## HEART HEALTH

We've already mentioned that Omega-3 plays an important role in heart function. Let's go into a bit more detail.

A 2002 study found that women who ate fish rich in Omega-3 regularly had a significantly lower risk of heart disease, fatal heart attacks, and non-fatal heart attacks. It may be helpful to look at how increasing fish intake decreased the risk of coronary disease:

- The risk was 0.79 for women who ate fish 1-3 times per month
- The risk dropped to 0.71 for women who ate fish at least once a week
- The risk dropped to 0.69 for women who ate fish 2-4 times per week
- The risk dropped to 0.66 for women who ate fish 5 times per week

Those might not seem like huge differences, but if you're at risk of heart disease then eating salmon may help to lower your risk.

## THYROID FUNCTION

Salmon is rich in selenium, which plays an essential role in healthy thyroid function. Your thyroid helps you maintain a healthy weight, among other things.

Selenium is particularly important for pregnant women. One study from 2007 found that pregnant women who took a selenium supplement were less likely to wind up with permanent hypothyroidism than women who were deficient in selenium.

## BRAIN FUNCTION (ADULTS AND KIDS)

It seems like everybody grew up referring to fish as “brain food.” In the case of salmon, that may be accurate.

Omega-3 and some of its components, including DHA and EPA, play a role in supporting healthy brain function – especially as we get older. In aging brains, glucose metabolism is reduced, and we found a study that noted a direct correlation between reduced Omega-3 intake and cognitive impairment.

## INFLAMMATION

The Omega-3 fatty acid in salmon, with its DHA and EPA, has a powerful anti-inflammatory effect on the body. Your body transforms them into two compounds, resolvins and protectins, which both have anti-inflammatory properties.

As we mentioned earlier, salmon is also a good source of Vitamin C, another powerful anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory vitamin.

There's no question that salmon has some significant health benefits. Coming up next, we'll find out whether salmon can help keep you healthy and prevent disease.

## CAN SALMON HELP YOU STAY HEALTHY?

It's one thing to acknowledge that salmon has good nutritional content and may offer some health benefits. However, as we age, many of us want to know that the foods we eat can help prevent disease and keep us healthy.



In this chapter, we'll explore some scientific research to find out whether adding salmon to your diet can help protect you against disease and keep you healthy as you age. We'll also talk about how often you need to eat salmon to reap the benefits.

### HOW ADDING SALMON TO YOUR DIET CAN PREVENT DISEASE

One of the most common arguments for eating salmon is that it can help prevent certain diseases and health problems. Is that true? Let's look at some of the research.

## Preventing Heart Disease

Omega-3 essential fatty acid is promoted as a heart-healthy fat, especially when compared to saturated fat and trans fat. Let's look at three studies that can help us understand the link.

Let's start with a study from the American Heart Association. It found that people who ate fish or took an Omega-3 supplement had a reduced risk of ischemic heart disease, strokes, and non-fatal heart attacks. It also noted a lower risk of conditions that contribute to heart disease, including obesity and high blood pressure.

The next study we found is one that looked at the ratio of Omega-3 to Omega-6 as it relates to heart disease. Remember, the ideal ratio recommended is 1:1, but most Americans get far more Omega-6 than they need. The study found that a low ratio of Omega-3 to Omega-6 had a preventive role in heart disease, as well as in other areas. It also found that lowering your ratio even a little could be beneficial, even if you don't get to the 1:1 ratio that's recommended.

The third study we found, which comes from the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, looked specifically at the amount of Omega-3 intake as a mitigating factor in fatal heart attacks and heart disease. It found that eating about 250 milligrams of Omega-3 per day could significantly reduce the risk of a fatal cardiac event.

The takeaway here is that adding salmon to your diet can help reduce your risk of heart disease, especially fatal heart disease. It can also reduce your risk of developing related diseases like high blood pressure and diabetes.

## Fighting Inflammatory Disorders

Next, let's talk about inflammation. Several of the nutritional components of salmon have anti-inflammatory effects, particularly Omega-3, Vitamin C, and Selenium. Let's see what the scientific evidence reveals.

First, we found a study that looked at the anti-inflammatory effects of Vitamin C on people between the ages of 60 and 70 who did not have diabetes or cardiovascular disease. It found that taking a daily supplement of Vitamin C reduced inflammatory markers in most subjects.

Next, we looked at a study from 2013 that examined the impact of Omega-3 on inflammatory diseases like gout, as well as metabolic disorder. It found that Omega-3 could suppress inflammatory responses and even prevent some inflammatory diseases.

Finally, we found an article that pointed out that selenium had a demonstrable anti-inflammatory effect and should be studied. We then found a study that examined the effects of selenium on both cells and animals and found that it suppressed inflammation.

There is ample evidence that the Omega-3, Vitamin C, and selenium in salmon offer anti-inflammatory benefits that may help prevent inflammatory disease as well as offering relief from symptoms related to inflammation.

### Cancer-Fighting Benefits

The thought of getting cancer is scary. You may have heard that eating salmon can reduce your risk of cancer.

The first study we found is one that compared the cancer risk of people who ate red meat regularly with those who ate fish. It found a direct correlation between red meat consumption and cancer risk, and an inverse correlation between fish consumption and cancer risk.

We also found a study that revealed that Omega-3 could slow the proliferation of breast cancer cells in women and even kill cancer cells in some cases.

The same is true of prostate cancer. We found a study that showed that men who took an Omega-3 supplement had a reduced risk of developing prostate cancer and that the Omega-3 also had the potential to slow the spread of cancer where it already existed.

It's also worth noting that researchers believe that many forms of cancer begin with inflammation. Salmon's anti-inflammatory benefits may also help to prevent cancer.

### Protecting Bones and Joints

As we mentioned earlier, salmon is one of the few foods that's naturally a good source of Vitamin D. Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium.

We found a review of studies that concluded that Vitamin D, particularly when taken in combination with calcium, could prevent fractures in post-menopausal women with osteoporosis.

We also found a study that said that Vitamin D supplementation could increase bone density and decrease bone loss – both very important as we age.

Here again, salmon's anti-inflammatory benefits are worth mentioning. It may help prevent arthritis or relieve the symptoms of arthritis.

## HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU EAT SALMON?

One of the burning questions about salmon is how often you should eat it. You may have noticed that some of the studies we've cited here have suggested that eating fish up to 5 times a week may offer increased health benefits over eating it less frequently. Does that mean you should eat salmon every day?

As a rule, it's important to be cautious about consuming too many cold water fish, like mackerel, sardines, and tuna. These fish tend to have more mercury than other species. However, an article in the Harvard Heart Letter noted that people who eat salmon don't need to be overly concerned with mercury in most cases because it tends to have low levels.

The American Heart Association recommends eating two servings of fatty fish like salmon twice a week. They identify a serving as 3.5 ounces. If you're worried about your fish intake, talk to your doctor before adding salmon to your diet.

Coming up next, we'll review the pros and cons of adding salmon to your diet.

## PROS AND CONS OF SALMON

We've established that eating salmon regularly can be beneficial to your health and may even be able to prevent serious illnesses like heart disease and cancer. However, it's important to look at both sides of the equation.



In this chapter, we'll review the pros and cons of adding salmon to your diet. We think that's the best way to give you the information you need to make an informed decision about whether to eat salmon, how much to eat, and what kind of salmon to eat.

## THE PROS OF EATING SALMON

Let's start with the pros of eating salmon, many of which we've already covered.

1. The Omega-3 and other nutrients found in salmon can help reduce your risk of heart disease when eaten regularly. Omega-3 reduces inflammation and may be especially effective at reducing the risk of fatal heart attacks and strokes.
2. The Vitamin C, Omega-3 and selenium in salmon have powerful anti-inflammatory effects. That means they can reduce your risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, and other inflammatory disease. They may also help reduce symptoms if you already have an inflammatory condition.
3. The selenium in salmon helps to regulate thyroid function and may help keep your metabolism working properly. It's even been shown to reduce the risk of hypothyroidism in pregnant women.
4. Omega-3 is essential for both brain development and brain function. It plays a role in early brain development and is good for pregnant and nursing women to eat. It may also have neuro-protective benefits that can prevent dementia in older people.
5. The Vitamin D in salmon promotes good bone health. It can increase bone density and decrease bone loss and may even be able to reduce the risk of fractures in people who have osteoporosis.
6. Salmon is widely available and reasonably affordable, although wild-caught salmon does tend to be more expensive than farmed salmon.

Eating salmon twice a week can provide you with a host of health benefits and help protect you from certain illnesses and diseases.

## THE CONS OF EATING SALMON

Now, let's look at the potential cons of eating salmon. It's important to note that many of these are related to farmed salmon, and we'll note that when it's relevant.

1. Farmed salmon tends to be high in Omega-6 and that can counteract the natural, anti-inflammatory benefits of the Omega-3.
2. There are some people who feel that eating any animal protein at all is less beneficial to your health than sticking to a plant-based diet, since plant proteins are naturally free of cholesterol.

3. Wild-caught salmon can be expensive when compared to farmed salmon. It's also more difficult to find in some parts of the country.
4. Farmed salmon are raised in confined quarters where disease may spread. There may also be bacteria present that wouldn't be there with wild-caught salmon.
5. Farmed salmon are given antibiotics and other drugs and when you eat the salmon, you'll be getting whatever it was fed, too.

For people who are worried about eating farmed salmon, there is one easy way to reduce the risks associated with eating it. You can simply remove the skin and the fat immediately beneath it, since that's where most contaminants will be.

Overall, we think the benefits outweigh the risks. We do think it's best to stick to wild-caught salmon if you can find it and afford it. The nutritional content is better, and it also tastes better!

In our next and final chapter, we'll address a crucial question: is taking fish oil as good for you as eating salmon? Keep reading to learn more!

## SALMON VS. SALMON OIL

You've seen bottles of fish oil capsules in the store. Sometimes they're labeled as Omega-3 oil, and sometimes the manufacturer specifies where the oil comes from. Common sources include salmon and krill.



In this chapter, we'll talk about what the differences are between salmon and fish oil, so you can make an informed decision about each option.

### THE KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SALMON AND OMEGA-3 SUPPLEMENTS

Many nutritionists emphasize that in most cases, it's preferable to get the nutrients you need from food instead of supplements. However, some people swear by supplements.

Here are some key differences between eating salmon and taking an Omega-3 supplement:

- The Omega-3 in salmon is balanced by other nutrients, including B vitamins, Vitamin C, selenium, and potassium. With an Omega-3 capsule, you're only getting one nutrient.
- Omega-3 capsules draw oil from a variety of sources. It may not always be possible to tell where the oil is coming from, or if it includes oil from high-mercury fish like mackerel, shark, or tilefish.
- Some people who take Omega-3 capsules complain of indigestion and other side effects. It's important to keep in mind that the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) does not regulate nutritional supplements in any way. If you do decide to take a supplement, make sure to buy from a reputable source.
- There's no evidence that fish oil supplements are any better or worse than eating fish. For that reason, the people who gain the most from taking supplements are those who don't include fish in their diets.

It is worth noting that two servings of salmon per week might not be enough to offset the Omega-6 you eat, especially if you tend to eat a lot of processed foods. If that's an issue for you, it may be worth taking an Omega-3 supplement in addition to eating fish.

## OMEGA-3 ALTERNATIVES

If you don't want to eat salmon – for example, if you're a vegetarian or vegan, or you simply don't like fish – you have other options to get the Omega-3 you need in your diet.

Some non-animal sources of Omega-3 include:

- Chia seeds
- Flax seeds and flax seed oil
- Brussels sprouts
- Algal oil (derived from algae)
- Hemp seeds and hemp seed oil
- Walnuts and walnut oil

- Perilla oil (perilla is a seed that's often used in Korean cuisine)
- Seaweed
- Edamame
- Kidney beans

Adding these foods to your diet can help you get the Omega-3 you need to be healthy.

The bottom line here is that fish oil supplements may be useful for people who don't eat fish to get the Omega-3 they need, but in general, it's preferable to get it from dietary sources. And, they won't provide the other nutritional content of salmon.

## CONCLUSION

Thank you for reading *The Truth About Salmon*. I hope you've found the information here to be useful and that you now understand the many health benefits of eating salmon.

As a reminder:

- Salmon is a good source of Omega-3 essential fatty acid, B vitamins, Vitamin C, Vitamin D, selenium, and potassium.
- Research shows that the nutrients in salmon are an important part of a healthy diet.
- The Omega-3 in salmon can help prevent heart disease, inflammation, and cancer. It also helps with brain development and can protect against dementia.
- The Vitamin D in salmon can boost bone density, prevent osteoporosis, and reduce the risk of fractures as you age.
- The selenium in salmon supports healthy thyroid function.
- Salmon has anti-inflammatory properties that can ease the symptoms of arthritis and prevent inflammatory diseases.

Keep in mind that in most cases, wild-caught salmon is preferable to farmed salmon, but if farmed salmon is what you can afford, then you can reduce the risks associated with it by removing the skin and subcutaneous fat before you eat it.

Fish is a healthy part of your diet. Aim to eat about two, 3.5 ounce servings of salmon each week to reap the benefits.

Thank you again for reading – and enjoy your salmon!

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