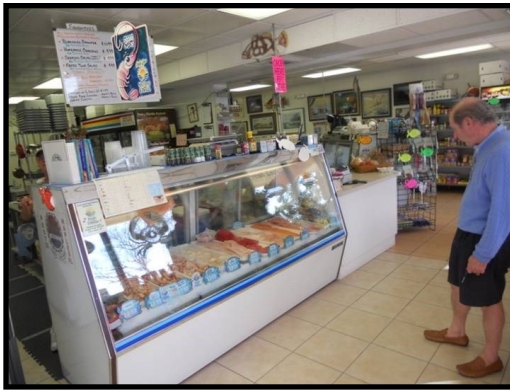


Florida Seafood and Omega-3 Fatty Acids



Perhaps one of the most recognized health benefits associated with seafood, while certainly not the only one, is their



omega-3 fatty acid content. These essential fatty acids are required for healthy human development and are not produced in substantial amounts by the human body. They must be obtained from dietary sources and many seafood choices are considered one of the richest sources of omega-3 fats. Health organizations suggest healthy individuals consume at least 250 to 500 milligrams of omega-3 fatty acids per day and eat at least two seafood meals per week to maximize the health benefits associated with their intake. The American Heart Association advises individuals with coronary artery issues to consume at least 1,000 milligrams per day.

Two types of omega-3 fatty acids, eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) are present in most of the seafood we eat. Both EPA and DHA are thought to reduce cardiovascular disease and contribute to brain and vision development in developing fetuses, infants and children. A third type of omega-3 fatty acid, alpha linoleic acid, is found in soybeans, leafy greens and certain nuts, but must be converted metabolically in the body to have the same level of health benefits that the direct consumption of EPA and DHA provide to human health.

Fish and shellfish obtain these important compounds by consuming phytoplankton, which are the primary producers of omega-3 fatty acids in the marine environment. Consequently, omega-3's are found throughout the aquatic food chain and are present in commercially harvested fish and shellfish, at some level. In general, fattier, dark-color fleshed fish such as salmon and herring contain higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids than leaner, light-color fleshed species, such as tilapia or cod. Factors such as diet, age,

reproductive status, physiology and surrounding environmental conditions, however, can also influence the omega-3 content found between seafood species.

Consumers interested in eating Florida seafood can choose from a variety of species to meet or exceed the recommended levels of omega-3 fatty acid intake. The chart *on the backside of this fact sheet* summarizes the omega-3 fatty acid values for some of the most popular Florida species. Spanish mackerel, shark and swordfish have the highest omega-3 levels, while stone crabs, mahi-mahi and clams have lower levels. Consumers, however, should not use omega-3 content as their only criteria for selecting seafood, as all choices are nutritionally beneficial, as a source of lean protein and other nutrients. Health experts recommend eating at least two seafood meals per week to maximize all the health benefits of seafood; not just those associated with omega-3 fatty acids.

To learn more about the health benefits associated with these important compounds, as well as for seafood in general, please visit:

www.seafoodhealthfacts.org

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Approximate value for 4 ounces of raw, edible portions	
<u>Species</u>	<u>Omega-3 Fatty Acid (milligrams)</u>
Spanish mackerel	1100
Shark	870
Swordfish	830
Bluefish	770
Oysters	610
Shrimp	490
Tilefish	430
Spiny lobster	380
Catfish (farm-raised)	370
Mullet	350
Snapper	320

Approximate value for 4 ounces of raw, edible portions	
<u>Species</u>	<u>Omega-3 Fatty Acid (milligrams)</u>
Tilapia	320
Blue crab	320
King mackerel	300
Grouper	260
Amberjack	260
Yellowfin tuna	230
Flounder	210
Scallops	200
Clams	150
Mahi-Mahi	110
Stone crab (cooked 3 oz)	N/A