

# The Role of Seafood Consumption in Child Growth and Development

## Factors that Influence Seafood Consumption

Seafood, including marine and freshwater fish, mollusks, and crustaceans, is a healthy food choice for most people; however, it can also contain contaminants. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration asked the National Academies to convene an expert committee to examine associations between seafood intake for children, adolescents, and pregnant and lactating women and child growth and development. The committee found that only around 20% of the studied population consumed the weekly amount of seafood recommended by the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA). As part of its efforts to further assess intake patterns, the committee identified six factors that influence seafood consumption.



### Culture, Ethnicity, and Recreational Background

Population-specific methods of catching and preparing seafood may influence the amount or type of seafood consumed by certain groups. Indigenous peoples, and sport and subsistence fishers and their families consume greater than average amounts of seafood.

### Geographic Location

People living near the Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf of Mexico coasts, or the Great Lakes, are more likely to consume seafood than people living elsewhere. However, most children or women in all areas of the United States consume less than the recommended two servings per week.

### Race and Ethnicity

Non-Hispanic Asian women and children were more likely than other groups to eat more than two seafood meals per week, followed by non-Hispanic white women and children.

## **Age**

Children of all ages are generally less likely than adults to consume seafood. Seafood is rarely included in school meals.

## **Income**

Individuals with higher household incomes tend to consume more seafood, and to consume seafood such as salmon which is richer in omega-3 fatty acids and other nutrients. Low-income households tend to consume less seafood, and to consume seafood which is less rich in nutrients such as tuna and shrimp.

## **Preparation Skills**

Most of the seafood consumed by both women and children comes from retail purchases and is eaten for lunch or dinner at home. Some studies have found that families are more likely to consume seafood when the parents are confident in their ability to prepare seafood dishes.

## **GUIDELINES ON SEAFOOD CONSUMPTION**

The DGA includes a recommendation that all U.S. adults aim to consume 8–12 ounces (two servings) of seafood per week. For children, the DGA recommend two servings per week in amounts corresponding to an individual's total daily caloric intake. The DGA also includes a recommendation to introduce seafood to children when they are around six months of age. There is limited information on how many consumers are aware of these guidelines, or whether awareness of these guidelines influences consumption.