

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent

e-mail: mkeith@ufl.edu

Are You Feeling Fishy Yet?

With all the rain we've been getting recently you might think we should start growing fins and gills! Thankfully that won't happen. But eating more fish would be a very good idea for our bodies in more ways than one. From heart to joints, fish is coming out on top in recent diet studies.

We've all heard of the benefits of a Mediterranean diet. Beyond just general observations, good medical studies keep finding that using that diet pattern improves our health. The most recent studies now say that we can cut our risks of heart disease, heart attacks and strokes by almost one third. That means that if three people with heart problems eat a regular diet, and three others who are very much like the first 3 eat a more Mediterranean-type diet, only 2 of the other 3 will have heart problems. Those are pretty good odds compared to many diet recommendations.

The study menu included fish several times a week, as well as nuts and beans instead of most of the red meats. There were plenty of fruits (three servings a day) and vegetables (three or more a day) including onions and garlic for flavors. Also included were low fat or fat free dairy products, and wine with dinner. The oil people used was olive, and they could have all the seasonings and herbs they enjoyed. That's not a hard way to eat, is it?

The other recent report was talking about arthritis and joint pain. They found that eating fish, especially the kinds with the omega-3 fats, helped to reduce the inflammation and pain of arthritis. People who ate at least 2 servings a week of fish were almost 40% less likely to develop arthritis. Again, those are pretty good odds to keep the creaky joints away.

Of course there's a 'catch'. It's not just any old fish. Going to the local fish fry every week is not going to cure you of these diseases. In fact, fried fish in general is not going to help. What you want is baked or broiled fish, or canned fish since that's basically been baked in the can. Fish sticks or nuggets, even if you cook them in the oven, are no help. If you want to boil fish for soup or chowder, that's fine too as long as the chowder is not full of heavy cream. A tomato or vegetable broth with chunks of fish can be delicious, and is much healthier than a fatty cream-based soup.

The fish included in both menus were mostly salmon, tuna, sardines and mackerel. Other seafood was included, but those fish are the best ones for the omega-3 fats the doctors think are responsible for a lot of the benefits.

The great thing about baking or broiling is that you can add whatever seasonings you enjoy. Fish can be baked plain or with just a slice of lemon, or dressed in a hearty Mexican-seasoned tomato and onion sauce. Or marinate it with splash of soy and slivers of ginger before grilling to make it an Oriental meal.

With so many ways to prepare, it should be easy to add several meals a week to the menu. And that's all it takes. Just two or three servings a week was enough to make the difference in these medical studies. So you can grill salmon one evening for dinner. That's one meal. Use the leftover fish for tacos the next day. That's a second meal. Then put sardines on your pizza, or just have tuna in salad for dinner another night and there's your third. If grilling salmon isn't in your future, use canned salmon to make patties and grill them like hamburgers.

And here's a recipe for a full meal tuna salad. If you like, add grated carrots and minced green peppers with the cucumber for more color and flavor. Make it in advance so that it will be chilled for dinner. Add rolls or low-salt pretzels, and a fruit pie with low fat yogurt for dessert. You won't even have to cook tonight!

Potato Tuna Salad

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| 1 pounds red potatoes | 2 cups cucumber, peeled, seeded, sliced |
| 1 cup sliced red onion | 2 Tbsp chopped fresh dill weed |
| 1 (12-oz) can chunk white tuna in water | ½ cup seasoned rice vinegar |
| ¼ cup pickle relish | ¼ tsp ground black pepper |

Wash potatoes, then boil until tender. Chill. Cut into ½ inch chunks. Combine potatoes, cucumber, onion and dill in serving bowl. Drain tuna. In smaller bowl combine tuna, relish, rice vinegar and pepper to taste. Gently mix tuna into potato mixture. Cover and chill. Makes 4-6 servings.

Recipe adapted from Chicken of the Sea Tuna.

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