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**ENERGIZE YOUR LIFE!
EAT HEALTHY-BE ACTIVE**

This newsletter is produced by the *Nutrition Education Network of Washington* to enhance communication and coordination among those who educate Washington families about nutrition and food. *Energize Newsletter for Nutrition Educators* shares brief information about programs and materials that support healthful and enjoyable eating.

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

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SNAP-Ed

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

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This Month's Focus: *Fabulous Fish*

Fish has long been part of our food culture, well before Washington became a state. Native American tribal people have eaten local shellfish and finfish, particularly salmon which plays a key role in their culture. Today we enjoy fresh and frozen fish, as well as canned fish such as tuna, salmon, and clams. Fish are highly nutritious yet most Americans fall short of the amount recommended for good health. Rich in protein, fish are low in saturated fat and contain many key micronutrients. On the other hand, mercury and other potential toxins in fish pose a risk. As nutrition educators, how do we guide our clients about how much to eat? In this issue of the *Energize Newsletter for Nutrition Educators*, we'll explore the health benefits, safety precautions, and resources to use with our clients.

Better Health with Fish – Adults who eat fish three or more times a week may go through adulthood swimmingly with decreased risk for chronic disease. This amount of finfish and shellfish is associated with less cardiovascular disease, obesity, and, in new research, [reduced risk for heart attacks among people with Type 2 diabetes](#). Omega-3 essential fatty acids found in fish, called DHA (docosahexanoic acid) and EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid), help the walls of the arteries stay flexible, reduce the risk of blood clots, and help fight inflammation. Among elderly adults, [a study involving the Mediterranean Diet](#) found that higher fish consumption and lower meat intake was associated with less brain atrophy, with an effect similar to 5 years of aging.



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How Much Fish Is Recommended? The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans advise a minimum of 8 ounces of fish per week, yet less than one-quarter of Americans meets that recommendation. This translates to 2 or 3 servings per week for most people. For children, the recommendation is to eat fish once or twice a week.

Latest Guidelines on Methylmercury and Seafood – In January 2017, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued joint recommendations for fish consumption to protect against

consuming too much mercury. Mercury is present in fish as methylmercury, which occurs naturally in the environment and is produced mainly by microscopic organisms in water, then taken in by fish. Because big fish eat lots of little fish, highest concentrations are found in older, larger predatory fish. High exposure to methylmercury, a neurotoxin, is tied to brain and nervous system problems, especially in fetuses, infants, and young children. Yet, these are exactly the ages when the nutritional benefit of seafood is particularly important for brain and visual development. Recognizing the need for fish intake during these formative times, the EPA and FDA now recommend for women who are pregnant, may become pregnant, or are breastfeeding to consume 8 to 12 ounces of fish (fin fish and shellfish)/week. These agencies have divided fish into 3 categories based on mercury content:

- Best Choices – 2-3 servings/week (90% of fish consumed in the US fall into this category, including salmon, freshwater trout, clams, cod, shrimp, and canned light tuna)
- Good Choices – 1 serving/week (such as halibut and snapper)
- Choices to Avoid (swordfish, shark, orange roughy, bigeye tuna, marlin, king mackerel, and tilefish from the Gulf of Mexico)

The [2017 EPA-FDA Advice on Fish and Shellfish](#) provides a list of fish in these categories, a good explanation of mercury in different types of canned tuna, and FAQs in its downloadable handouts in English and Spanish.

Clam Digging: Keeping It Fun and Safe – Clam digging on Washington’s beaches with friends and family can be a blast. Filling buckets of razor clams, then pan-frying them or preparing chowder is a delicious and healthful activity. Until it’s not. At certain times, razor clams can be contaminated with marine toxins. As clams take in some species of algae, they concentrate these toxins. When people eat large amounts of the contaminated clams, those toxins can cause illness or be fatal. The Washington Department of Health (DOH) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) routinely

sample razor clams and other shellfish for safety. Nutrition educators who work with clients who go shellfishing can guide them to a map of current beach closures for certain species, [DOH’s Shellfish Safety Information](#).

For those who are digging razor clams for the first time, there’s good information and a how-to video at the [WDFW’s razor clam page](#). In our state, people can legally harvest a wide variety of shellfish besides razor clams, including crab, crayfish, geoduck, mussels, oysters, shrimp, and squid, and other varieties of clams. [WDFW’s recreational shellfishing page](#) offers information about all of these. The WDFW and DOH work hard to make recreational shell-fishing in our state a fun and safe activity.



Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

Sustainable Seafood – [FishWatch](#), an endeavor of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, offers an excellent website to find out whether a fish is sustainably raised and responsibly harvested. By typing the name of a fish in the “Find a Fish” search box, the site scans a massive database of US fish, then shows whether it is sustainably produced or not. Pictures help identify the many species of a certain fish.

Cleaner Water for Local Salmon – After heavy rain, stormwater runoff pours into the streams and rivers headed to Puget Sound, carrying with it pollutants from city streets. Wild salmon swimming in that water can be severely harmed: young salmon may die, and adult salmon may not make it back upstream to spawn. Dr. John Stark, Professor of Ecotoxicology at WSU Puyallup and a team of researchers are developing ways to save the lives of salmon and their future generations. One is permeable pavement, so that the runoff gets absorbed back into the ground, rather than running into the Sound. Another involves treating runoff with a mix of sand, compost, bark, and water treatment residues. Both have resulted in dramatic decreases in contaminated rivers and streams inhabited by endangered salmon. Do the pollutants in salmon affect humans who eat them? That isn’t known yet, says Dr. Stark. He encourages people to eat salmon, saying “Eating fish is really good for health – a half-pound a week. The health benefits of fish, such as salmon, far outweighs the small risk of exposure to pollutants that may be found in fish in very low levels.” (Contact: John D Start, PhD, Professor, Ecotoxicology Program, Director, WSU Puyallup Research and Extension Center, and Director Washington Stormwater Center, 253-445-4568, StarkJ@wsu.edu)

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Fish Recipes – Whether fresh, frozen, or canned, some good low-cost and tasty recipes can be found on these sites:

- At Washington State University's [Grow Happy Kids' recipe site](#), enter the words fish, salmon, or tuna, and links to recipes will pop up. Most are easy recipes using five ingredients or less.
- Oregon State University's Food Hero also provides low-cost recipes. Go to the [recipe ingredients site](#), scroll down to Protein, then click on Fish (all types), Fish (salmon), or Fish (tuna).
- [What's Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl](#) provides low-cost seafood recipes from around the country. Search "fish" or "seafood" for recipes and accompanying salsas or sauces that make good accompaniments for fish.



WSU Extension SNAP-Ed

Fish in MyPlate – MyPlate offers a consumer-friendly [handout](#) about adding fish to the diet. Part of the "10 Tips" series, it is available in both English and Spanish. If you need photos of fin fish, shellfish, or canned fish for a handout or poster, consider using [USDA's seafood images](#).

WASHINGTON GROWN

Fresh This Month – Washington is on track to have the most consecutive days of sunshine on record, a welcome change from our dark, damp spring. All this sunshine has been a boon for local produce. At farmers' markets are many varieties of berries stone fruit, and melons. This can be a fun time to try an unfamiliar fruit such as tayberries, pluots, casaba melon, or Asian pears. August and September are our best months for a great variety and volume of vegetables...and plenty of home-grown zucchini.



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Wonderful Watermelon – Watermelon is one of few foods rich in the antioxidant lycopene. This red plant pigment, also found in tomatoes, may help prevent prostate cancer and reduce the risk for heart disease. Because the benefits are linked to the amount of lycopene, a dark red watermelon is more nutritious than a pink, partially ripe melon. To find a perfect watermelon, first take a good look. The rind should be firm and symmetrical, and free from dents, cuts, or bruises. Find the buttery yellow spot where it sat on the ground and ripened in the sun. After giving it a once-over, pick it up. It should be heavy for its size, indicating that it's juicy. True to its name, watermelon is 92% water. Give the melon a thump and listen for a hollow sound. Once home, rinse the melon in running water (no soap) and pat dry. A watermelon can be stored at room temperature for 7 to 10 days, but once cut, it should be refrigerated. Grill it, make it into juicy popsicles, or

transform it into a pizza: start with an unpeeled circular slab as the base, then top with fruit and cut into pizza-style wedges. [Snap-Ed Connection's watermelon page](#) provides links to low-cost recipes, selection, and storage, including this [video](#).



EAT TOGETHER EAT BETTER – Family Meals Focus

Because our readers have told us that Family Meals is a hot topic, in the May 2011 issue we began a small section on recent news relating to this topic and our long-standing signature program, Eat Together, Eat Better.

Pass It or Plate It? In some families, parents dish up plates of food for their children (plated meal service), and in other families, they pass bowls of food around the table and children can take what they want (family-style service). Many families use a combination. A recently published study looked at whether the type of service was associated with a healthier diet and less obesity. There was no difference. However, family-style was better for "responsive feeding," where the parents learn to respond to the child's cues for hunger and satiety. Researchers recommend that parents using plated service allow their children to ask for seconds if they still feel hungry, and to avoid telling children to clean the plate if they feel full. (Source: Loth, KA et al, "An exploration of how family dinners are served and how service style is associated with dietary and weight outcomes in children." *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 49(6):513-518, 2017.

OUR MISSION: *The Nutrition Education Network* coordinates nutrition education efforts to communicate consistent, positive and relevant messages to increase awareness of healthful and enjoyable eating among low-income families. *Energize* is one way that *the Network* shares information and resources to accomplish this mission.

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