

Seafood is Brain Food

A DIVE INTO MENTAL HEALTH & DEPRESSION



Depression and anxiety are the most common mental health conditions in the world, and they are on the rise. Anxiety and depression affect at least 6% of adults in the United States – or 1 in 17 – with twice as many women as men affected, and it occurs across all ages.^{1,2}

When we are depressed or anxious, we naturally resist self-care, including preparing and eating nutritious food. But good nutrition is more important than ever for those suffering from depression. **Research shows that our daily food choices influence our mental health, and evidence is strong that seafood is brain food.**

Feelings of anxiety and stress can be eased by regular consumption of fish.^{3,4}

Improving nutrition takes time. When we change our diet, it can take several weeks to feel any significant improvement. Other types of self-care are important, too, such as physical activity, getting fresh air, connecting with friends and family, rest and sleep.



For more ways to increase your seafood intake, visit our website or follow us on social media.

[f](#) [i](#) [t](#) [p](#) @Seafood4Health | #Seafood2xWk

For citations, visit seafoodnutrition.org/brainfood

- **People who regularly eat fish are 20% less likely than their peers to have depression.**^{5,6,7} Over the past 20 years, dozens of studies evaluating more than 20,000 cases of depression have shown that eating 8-12oz. of fish per week (about 2-3 servings) and/or consuming omega-3 fish oil supplements significantly reduces risk for major depression.^{5,6} In fact, the American Psychiatric Association endorsed the fatty acids in fish as an effective part of depression treatment.⁸
- **People who live in countries that eat more fish have less depression.**^{9,10} Diets rich in seafood, such as a Mediterranean Diet, are noted to reduce inflammation, one of the ways eating fish appears to reduce depression.¹¹⁻¹³
- **Fish is like a multivitamin for your brain.** Fish is more than just an excellent source of lean protein and essential omega-3s, it provides other vitamins and minerals important for mental health. The nutrients that tend to be low in people who are depressed – vitamin D, magnesium, and zinc – are found in fish.¹⁴⁻¹⁹
- **Eating fish can reduce stress and distress for new parents.** Studies of pregnant women reported that eating 8-12oz., or 2-3 servings, of fish a week reduced psychological distress and post-partum depression. Interestingly, fathers felt less distress during the pregnancy when they regularly ate fish, too.²⁰
- **If you are taking anti-depressant medication, research reports the nutrients in fish may make them work better.** Mental health medications work better in people with better nutrition. Getting complete protein from fish, along with omega-3s EPA + DHA and zinc, for example, have been shown to improve response to anti-depressants.^{5,10,21,22} The American Psychiatric Association recommends that all Americans eat fish two or more times a week, preferably fatty fish such as salmon or trout.⁸
- **Eating fish shows promise for reducing migraine headaches.** Increasing omega-3s EPA + DHA while lowering omega-6 intake (often found in junk food containing soybean and vegetable oils) has been shown to significantly reduce frequency, duration, and severity of migraine headaches.²³