

**Healthy Bytes Initiative Article**

**May 2019 Salmon**

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**Savory Salmon**

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Salmon, and other cold-water fish like tuna, mackerel and sardines, are considered a good source of protein and healthy omega 3 fatty acids. These beneficial fats (DHA and EPA) are believed to contribute to heart health, brain function and reduced inflammation. There is new evidence to suggest that omega 3 fats may also be protective against several types of cancer, Alzheimer’s disease, asthma, diabetes and some forms of autoimmune disease.

Besides protein and omega 3 fats, salmon also provides a good source of vitamin D, often deficient in those who live in higher latitudes like Oregon, and B12, important for nerve and muscle function. There are several species of salmon including Chinook, sockeye, coho and pink. Salmon can be found as steaks or fillets, fresh, frozen, canned or smoked. Salmon flesh is usually pink but can range from red to orange and lightens slightly after being cooked. Fresh fish should be free of any fishy smell.

Like other cold water fish, salmon can be high in mercury, a toxic heavy metal, which can be harmful to pregnant and nursing mothers. Larger Chinook salmon may have more mercury than smaller sockeye species and wild salmon have been found to have fewer contaminants than farmed. Limit portions of all cold water fish to 3 oz steaks twice per week. Pregnant women should also avoid raw salmon and other fish. Smoked salmon is considered safe to consume during pregnancy.

Mercury-free sources of omega 3 fats come from plants including algae, flax and chia seeds, walnuts and soybeans. These plant sources have an added bonus that they also contain healthful fiber. Since algae is also a good sources of omega 3 fats, dried algae can be used in soups, on salads or rolled with rice in sushi for added omega 3s.

The easiest way to cook salmon is to bake it in the oven. Preheat oven to 400° and line baking dish with foil and spray lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Fillets come with the skin attached on one side. Place skin side down in pan and pat dry. Drizzle or brush with olive oil and sprinkle with your favorite seasonings. Bake 10-12 minutes for every inch thick (more for multiple steaks) until they reach an internal temperature of 145°. Properly cooked salmon will flake when broken with the fork. Remove skin and serve with a squeeze of lemon juice.

Salmon can be served hot as a side dish or in a casserole, or cold as a salad topping. Canned salmon can be made into cakes with brown rice or served as hors d’oeuvres with crackers or vegetables.