

HEALTH TODAY

Alison Batcheler

Seafood, eat it

Optimal nutrition can help prevent and manage serious illness

A Mediterranean-type diet, high in seafood, can help prevent and manage arthritis, heart disease, diabetes and many of the big cancers, according to Alexandra McManus, from the Centre of Excellence for Science, Seafood and Health (CESSH) at Curtin University.

Professor McManus, who spent three years reviewing all nutrition research and information available, has developed a series of easy-to-follow meal plans to help GPs advise patients about optimal nutrition.

The 14-day plans had been designed specifically to help manage and prevent arthritis, type 2 diabetes, reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and some nutrition-related cancers, including prostate, breast, colon, oesophageal and lung, Professor McManus said. Dietary guides for dementia were also being developed.

"It clearly shows what people should be eating over 14 days to assist in management of the condition or that will help prevent the condition progressing," she said.

"They look like a restaurant menu so you can pick and choose — it is not complex.

"A healthy diet, high in fruit, vegetables and seafood — particularly oily fish — helps us keep in optimal health."

For arthritis management, it was recommended women consumed 500mg per day of omega-3s sourced from seafood and that men ate 600mg of omega-3 daily, Professor McManus said.

People with early-stage rheumatoid (inflammatory)

arthritis and a predisposition to osteoarthritis who ate such a diet high in seafood could significantly alleviate their joint symptoms.

Benefits included reduced joint tenderness, a reduction in morning stiffness and many people reported a reduced use of analgesic and anti-inflammatory drugs.

Such a diet also helped maintain an optimal body weight and reduced the risk of other chronic diseases such as obesity and type 2 diabetes that could compromise joint health.

"What we eat has a dramatic effect on how our metabolism and body works," Professor McManus said.

Recipes and meal alternatives were included and designed to be based on easily reckoned palm-size portions.

Professor McManus said calculating portion size by what

could fit comfortably into the flat palm (not heaped, overflowing or compressed and with fingers outstretched) was the simplest way to reckon the appropriate amount for each individual.

More detailed plans were available for GPs. People with advanced rheumatoid arthritis often required additional omega-3s in supplement form and should be advised by their doctor as part of their treatment regime.

While obtaining omega-3s directly from food was optimal, if people chose to use supplements, it was essential to use those of good quality, Professor McManus said.

For information on supplements: omega-3centre.com

For eating guides for diabetes, coronary heart disease, cancer and arthritis: cessh.curtin.edu.au/resources/health.cfm/.



Food for thought: Fruit, vegetables and seafood help maintain optimal health.



The good oil:
Professor
Alexandra
McManus.

Many benefits of regularly eating the oceans' bounty

Research suggests that two to three serves* of fish per week (especially those high in omega-3s) as part of a healthy diet:

1. Reduces the overall risk of dying by 17 per cent.
2. Is protective against cardiovascular diseases.
3. Reduces the risk of coronary heart disease by up to 30 per cent.
4. Reduces the risk of coronary heart disease in diabetic women.
5. Reduces the risk of colorectal cancer particularly in women.
6. Reduces the risk of lung cancer mortality in males (with lung cancer).
7. Reduces the risk of subsequent stroke in women who have had a stroke.

Four or more serves of fish per week is associated with a reduced risk of prostate cancer.

Five or more serves of seafood per week reduces the risk of ischaemic stroke by 30 per cent.

Daily intake of marine fatty acids (omega-3s) is associated with a 24 per cent reduced risk of metastatic cancer.

Men who ate no fish

Had a two to three-fold higher frequency of prostate cancer than those who ate moderate or high amounts of fish.

*A serve is calculated as 150g of fish or seafood. Varieties high in omega-3s include Atlantic salmon, trout, sardines, and canned salmon. Bream, oysters, mussels and mullet are also good sources. For information on omega-3 content of seafood and quantities recommended: cessh.curtin.edu.au/resources/health.cfm/.

Source: Professor Alexandra McManus, Centre of Excellence for Science, Seafood and Health, Curtin University.