

BY JEAN CARPER

FISH

is health insurance

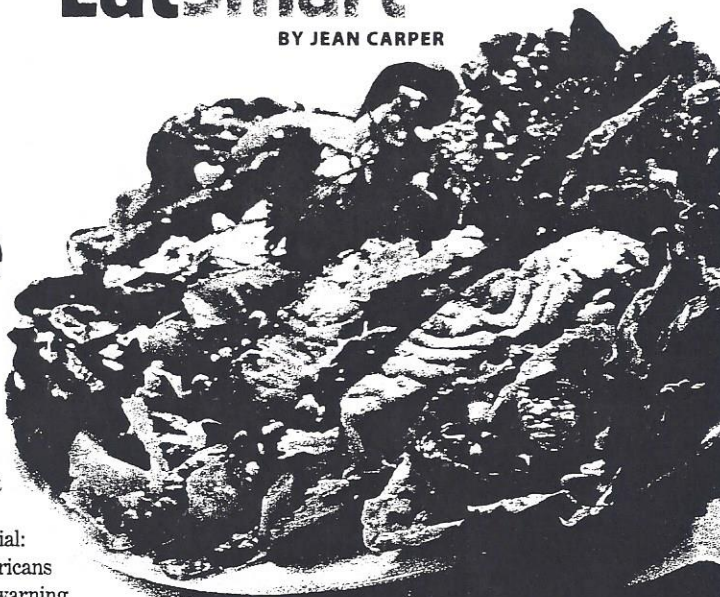
And most of us lack enough coverage.

EAT FISH! You've heard it before, but now the case is so compelling that you absolutely must pay attention or face overwhelming health risks. Fish's secret is its unique oil (omega-3 fatty acids), which is essential for proper cell functioning. But most of us get only 15% of the omega-3 we need.

Here's the latest research on fish oil's life-saving potential:

► **Men: Drop-dead protection.** More than 250,000 Americans die suddenly of heart attacks every year; half have no warning signs. Yet, eating fatty fish could stop an astonishing 80% of such deaths in men, says new Harvard research involving 22,000 male physicians. It's the first time fish oil has been found to save lives in people with no history of heart disease. Men with the highest blood omega-3 fats had the lowest risk, because fish oil prevents the irregular heartbeats that trigger instant death in heart attacks.

► **Women: Heart attack antidote.** The more often women eat



Summer Salad with Cumin-Crusted Salmon

Salad:

- 2 ounces pine nuts
- 5 cups mixed greens
- 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup scallions, sliced
- 1 large orange, cut in 1-inch chunks
- ½ cup feta cheese, crumbled
- 1 cup cilantro, chopped

Dressing:

- 2 Tbs. orange juice concentrate
- 4 Tbs. olive oil
- ½ tsp. cumin
- 1½ Tbs. balsamic vinegar
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- ¼ tsp. salt

Cumin-Crusted Salmon:

- 1½ Tbs. cumin
- 2 tsps. paprika
- ¼ tsp. salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 pound salmon fillet, skin removed

Heat a non-stick skillet, add pine nuts and stir until toasty, about 5 minutes. In a large bowl, place all salad ingredients (reserve half of the cilantro and half of the pine nuts for garnish).

In a separate bowl, stir dressing ingredients together.

In a bowl, combine cumin, paprika, salt and pepper. Cut salmon in 8 strips and coat with spices. Grill (or sear in a non-stick skillet brushed with canola oil) until crusty.

Toss salad and dressing; divide on plates. Top with salmon and reserved cilantro and pine nuts.


Serves 4.

Per serving: 605 calories, 35g protein, 29g carbohydrates, 40g fat (8g saturated), 7.6g fiber, 741mg sodium.

fish, the less likely they are to have a heart attack or die of a "cardiac event," says other Harvard research, tracking 85,000 female nurses. Eating fish only once a week cut heart attack risk by 29%; the figure jumped to 34% in women who ate fish five times a week. Researchers credit the omega-3 fat in fish.

► **Cuts strokes.** Fish was even more dramatic in preventing strokes in the nurses. Women who ate fish more than five times a week suffered half as many strokes as occasional fish eaters, primarily strokes due to blood clots. Like aspirin, omega-3 oils discourage clots and have anti-inflammatory action.

► **Cancer block.** New French research has found that women with the highest omega-3s in breast fatty tissue were nearly 70% less apt to have breast cancer than women with the least omega-3s. In a new Swedish study, women who ate fatty fish twice a week cut their risk of endometrial cancer by 40%, compared with women who ate fatty fish less than once a month. The same Swedish investigators found prostate cancer rates were two or three times higher in non-fish eaters than in men who ate moderate or high amounts.

► **Brain food.** Fish eaters are less apt to be depressed, violent, suicidal and antisocial. Probable reason: Omega-3 boosts serotonin, the brain's feel-good chemical. Eating fatty fish also may help prevent and treat Alzheimer's disease, says Canadian researcher Julie Conquer. She found low omega-3s in elderly people who were intellectually impaired or diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Fish oil is essential for fetal and infant brains; in Danish research, pregnant women who ate fish once a week cut their risk of premature delivery by a third. 

Contributing Editor JEAN CARPER is an authority on food as medicine. You may contact her at jeancarper.com.

For the greatest omega-3 benefit

Buy the fattiest fish. Try mackerel, anchovies, herring, sardines, salmon, tuna and turbot. Frozen and canned are OK, the USDA says.

Eat enough. Daily, if you eat 2,000 calories, get at least 650 milligrams of omega-3, experts say. A

week's quota might be one of these:

- 6 ounces fresh mackerel*
- 10 ounces canned sardines
- 11 ounces pickled herring
- 12 ounces fresh salmon*
- 13 ounces canned salmon
- 14 ounces fresh tuna*
- 24 ounces canned albacore tuna

* weight before cooking

Cook correctly. Deep-frying destroys the benefits. Best cooking methods: bake, broil, poach, steam, stir-fry, sauté or stew.

Cut back on bad fats. They

neutralize omega-3s. Restrict trans fats (margarines, processed foods) and omega-6 fats (corn oil, regular safflower or sunflower oils,

soybean oil). Use olive oil and canola oil.

Get the right ratio. It's critical that the ratio of

omega-3 to omega-6 be no more than 1:4. Most Americans' ratio is about 1:15.

Don't eat fish? Take fish oil capsules. If you're on medication, or taking fish oil for a specific problem, check with a doctor first. OK on your own: 800-1,000mg of omega-3 supplements daily.

Caution: Pregnant women, nursing mothers and young children should avoid eating shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish, which may contain high levels of mercury.

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EatSmart

BY JEAN CARPER

SAVE YOUR BRAIN

Remember these foods —
and soon you'll be able to remember so much more.

SCIENTISTS ARE discovering new ways food and supplements affect your brain. Here's the latest research on nutritional ways to boost memory, mood and kids' IQ scores and to protect against mental decline as you get older.

► **Curry for the brain.** Why does Alzheimer's disease strike only 1% of India's over-65 population vs. 10% of America's? New UCLA research finds one reason may be Indian food's curry spices, especially turmeric, which contains the antioxidant curcumin. Daily low doses of curcumin slashed deposits of brain plaque (a hallmark of Alzheimer's) by 50% in mice. Probable reason: Curcumin is a strong anti-inflammatory, similar to non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen, also tied to fewer Alzheimer's cases. But curcumin may be safer than NSAIDs in preventing Alzheimer's, researchers concluded.

► **Fish oil for depression.** Studies show fish-eaters get less depression. Now Dutch research reports fish oil may help cure depression. "It's a breakthrough finding," says psychiatrist Norman Rosenthal of Georgetown University, author of the new book *The Emotional Revolution*. Fish oil contains two omega-3 fatty acids: EPA and DHA. In a study of people with ordinary "unipolar" depression, adding just 2,000 milligrams of EPA-type fish oil capsules daily to regular medication halved depression scores in three weeks, possibly because fish oil raises brain levels of serotonin, a mood-controlling neurotransmitter. In recent Harvard research, very high doses of fish oil also relieved manic depression.

► **Vitamins boost kids' IQ.** Want your children to score higher on IQ tests? Try

vitamins, says David Benton, a psychologist at Britain's University of Wales Swansea. In a new analysis of the evidence, he finds 10 of 13 studies confirm that a daily multivitamin/mineral pill raises non-verbal IQ test scores in kids with nutrient-deficient diets. Vitamins can't give a normal kid the brain of a genius, but Benton says supplements can correct marginal deficiencies from a poor diet that cause substandard intellectual functioning. He estimates that one-third to half of children might boost non-verbal IQ scores, sometimes "dramatically," by taking supplements.


► **Folic acid, an all-round brain saver.** To keep memory sharp as you age, eat lots of folic acid, a B vitamin found in leafy green vegetables, citrus fruits and dried beans, say Tufts University researchers. They find that people with the highest blood levels of folic acid have little or no memory loss after middle age. Folic acid also seems to help prevent Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. A lack of folic acid allows a buildup of toxic homocysteine, which clogs blood vessels and damages brain cells, says Mark Mattson of the National Institute on Aging. He finds animals low in folic acid develop severe

Parkinson's symptoms. An easy brain protector: supplements with 400 to 800 micrograms of folic acid.

► **Minerals boost brainpower.** Have trouble concentrating or recalling words? You may have marginal deficiencies of minerals, says Mary J. Kretsch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Western Human Nutrition Research Center in Davis, Calif. She found that men given a low-zinc diet for three weeks lost their ability to quickly recall specific words, and women with borderline anemia (lack of iron) lost concentration and focus. The danger is especially great in dieting women, Kretsch notes.

In recent research at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, older people who took multivitamin/mineral supplements for a year improved on tests of short-term memory, concentration, abstract thinking and problem solving.

► **It's blueberries again — and spinach.** A few years ago, Tufts research proclaimed antioxidant-rich blueberries, strawberries and spinach as brain food. A slew of new evidence confirms it, at least in animals. Elderly rats fed blueberry extract beat younger rats on

memory tests at the University of Houston. In Canadian studies, blueberries reduced stroke damage in lab animals. Researchers credited blueberries' anti-inflammatory and anti-clotting activity. And at the University of South Florida, investigator Paula Bickford found that feeding animals spinach reversed learning loss that comes with age. How much might help? In human terms, the animals ate about 1 cup of blueberries a day or a large spinach salad. 



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Spinach Salad With Berries and Curry Dressing

This recipe is packed with brain boosters.

6 ounces fresh spinach (about 6 cups),
torn into bite-size pieces
1 cup thickly sliced strawberries
1 cup blueberries, trimmed
1 small red onion, thinly sliced
½ cup chopped pecans

Non-Fat Curry Dressing

2 Tbs. balsamic vinegar
2 Tbs. rice vinegar
1 Tb. plus 1 tsp. honey
1 tsp. curry powder
2 tsps. Dijon mustard
Salt and pepper to taste

Wash and dry spinach. Whip together dressing ingredients. Add to spinach and toss lightly. Add berries, onion and pecans. Toss lightly and serve.

Serves: 6.
Per serving: 117 calories, 2g protein, 6.4g fat (0.5g saturated), 3g fiber, 13.6g carbohydrates, 67mg sodium.

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