

Best Way to Cook Fish for Heart

Health: If you're eating your way to better heart health by having fish once or twice a week, you should make sure it's baked or boiled, instead of fried, dried or salted. Why? Fish that is baked or boiled packs a bigger punch of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids, according to a study from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. And for women especially, it's a good idea to cook the fish using a low-sodium soy sauce or tofu. "It appears that boiling or baking fish with low-sodium soy sauce [shoyu] and tofu is beneficial, while eating fried, salted or dried fish is not. In fact, these methods of preparation may contribute to your risk," study author Lixin Meng said in a news release from the American Heart Association. "We did not directly compare boiled or baked fish versus fried fish, but one can tell from the [risk] ratios, boiled or baked fish is in the protective direction, but not fried fish." The study: The team followed 82,243 men and 103,884 women in Los Angeles County, California and Hawaii to assess the source, type, amount and frequency of dietary intake of omega-3 fatty acids. The study participants included blacks, whites, Hispanics, Japanese and native Hawaiians who were between 45 to 75 years old and had no history of heart disease. The results: During the nearly 12 years of follow-up, there were 4,516 heart-related deaths among the participants.

Among men, those who ate the most omega-3 fatty acids (about 3.3 grams per day) had a 23 percent lower risk of cardiac death than those who ate only 0.8 grams per day. "Clearly, we are seeing that the higher the dietary omega-3 intake, the lower the risk of dying from heart disease among men," Meng explained.

Among women, the link between omega-3 fatty acids and a lower risk of cardiac death wasn't as apparent; however, the study found clear heart health benefits for women who consumed greater amounts of shoyu and tofu. "My guess is that, for women, eating omega-3s from shoyu and tofu that contain other active ingredients such as phytoestrogens might have a stronger cardioprotective effect than eating just omega-3s," Meng said. The study was presented at the American Heart Association's annual meeting in Orlando, Florida.