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Family Matters

Improving Health Together

September 2018 Newsletter

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Tuna: An Easy and Nutritious Choice

By Julie Klausing, Dietetic Intern & Sheila Gains, Family & Consumer Science Agent, Arapahoe County

Often underestimated, canned tuna is a versatile fish that can be made into a variety of different meals. With some creativity (and helpful recipes), tuna can be used in casseroles, salads, wraps, pasta dishes, and so much more! Although it may come in a little can, it reaps a big reward. Tuna is affordable, easy to prepare, and nutritious! Since it's a shelf-stable item, tuna should be a staple in everyone's pantry for when you need to create an easy meal for the family. Whether it is breakfast, lunch, or dinner, tuna can be added to the menu for an easy and nutritious choice.



Nutrition Benefits

Canned tuna is a great source of lean protein and vitamin B12. It also provides vitamin D, and omega-3 fatty acids. Some studies have shown that consuming seafood regularly may actually decrease your risk for cardiovascular disease and obesity. Including tuna in your diet is an easy and affordable way to increase your seafood intake.

Nutrients in Tuna:

- **Protein** is essential for muscle development and growth. Including protein sources low in saturated fat, like tuna is a great way to help your child grow!
- **Vitamin B12** helps keep the body's nervous system and blood cells healthy. Just one serving of tuna can provide your child with their daily need of Vitamin B12.
- Although many people are familiar with **vitamin D** being the sunshine vitamin, it is found in foods too. Tuna provides vitamin D to help build healthy bones for your child!
- **Omega-3 fatty acids** are important for brain development and keeping the heart healthy. Offering your child tuna is one way to include this important nutrient in their diet!

The U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend eating a variety of seafood at least twice a week (a total of at least a 8oz/week for older children (ages 7-17) and adults, and a total of at least 4oz/week for younger children (ages 2-7)).

For more info on incorporating seafood into your child's diet. [http://
extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/fammatrs/fm1707e.pdf](http://extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/fammatrs/fm1707e.pdf).

Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods ...

Purchasing/Storage Tips

You may be surprised when you walk down the grocery aisle and see all of the different types of tuna available. Here are some guidelines that may help if you're not familiar with the tuna market.

- Avoid damaged cans with dents or bulges
- Look for tuna canned in water rather than oil
- Compare sodium content – some tuna contains added salt, while others do not
- Light vs White/Albacore
 - ♦ Light- Softer texture and stronger flavor
 - ♦ White /Albacore - Firm texture and mild flavor
- There are flavored tuna packets available that are quick and easy for snacks, but check the sodium content of these before purchasing
- Refrigerate leftover tuna within 2 hours of serving in a covered container for up to 2 days



Let's Talk

Talk to your kids about building strong muscles with the help of tuna. Let them help decide on different flavors or recipes they may want to try. Since you can make a variety of meals with tuna, it's a great way to let the kids help in the kitchen and show them how one ingredient can be used in so many different dishes! See how many creative things you can do with tuna and keep track of which are your favorites. Be aware that tuna may taste differently with each recipe you try so don't stop serving tuna if they don't like it the first time. Make sure they try it hot and cold at least once because temperature can also affect the flavor. You may want to try the white/albacore tuna that typically has a more mild "tuna" flavor or start with a flavored packet that you think they may enjoy (barbeque, ranch, buffalo, etc.).

- Worried about Mercury? Pregnant women and children can safely eat up to 12 oz. of light/skipjack tuna and 4 oz. of white/albacore per week. More info can be found at <https://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/UCM536321.pdf>

Recipes for Health

Tuna Veggie Melt

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 5 minutes

Makes: 6 open face melts

Ingredients:

1 can (5 ounces) **tuna** in water, drained
1/4 cup **celery**, chopped (about 1 stalk)
1 **green onion**, sliced
1/2 cup **carrot**, grated

1 Tablespoon **mayonnaise**
1/4 teaspoon **pepper**
3 whole wheat **English muffins**
1/2 cup (2 ounces) grated **cheddar cheese**



Directions

1. Preheat oven broiler.
2. In a small bowl, mix tuna, celery, onion, carrot, mayonnaise and pepper.
3. Top each muffin half with tuna mixture and grated cheese.
4. Broil until cheese melts, about 3 minutes.
5. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

Recipe from: Food Hero, Oregon Extension - <http://foodhero.org/recipes/tuna-veggie-melt>