

Secrets to picking the freshest seafood

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(HealthDay)—You know how important it is to eat seafood twice a week, but buying fresh fish and shellfish can seem daunting. You'll find that it's a lot easier if you remember a few simple rules.

When buying whole [fish](#), look for bright, clear eyes. The eyes are the window to a truly fresh fish, because they quickly turn to a dull gray with age. The rest of a fish will also fade as it sits around, so look for vibrant flesh. If you're considering a fillet that still has the skin on, that skin should look shiny, metallic and clean. Any dullness or discoloration is another sign of age.

Finally, a fresh fish should smell like [clean water](#) or just slightly briny, never fishy. Under no circumstances should you ever buy a nasty smelling fish—cooking can't improve a fish past its prime.

As for shellfish, buy only at stores with rapid turnover so you can be assured of fresh mussels, clams, oysters and more. Their shells should be tightly closed. If slightly open, they should close quickly if you tap on them—if not, don't buy them. Also, any mussels or clams that haven't opened after being cooked are spoiled and must be thrown away.

Whether you shop at a dedicated fish store or the fish counter of your local grocery, your best bet is to make friends with the fishmonger and find out the days new shipments come in. Shop then and you will be rewarded for your extra effort with the best-tasting [seafood](#).

At home, keep all seafood very cold—ideally at 32 degrees—right up until you cook it. That means storing it in the fridge on a bed of ice (replace the ice if it melts before you use the seafood). Because seafood is so perishable, use it quickly, preferably within a day of buying it.

More information: FoodSafety.gov has more on all aspects of [shopping for seafood](#) and preparing it safely.

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