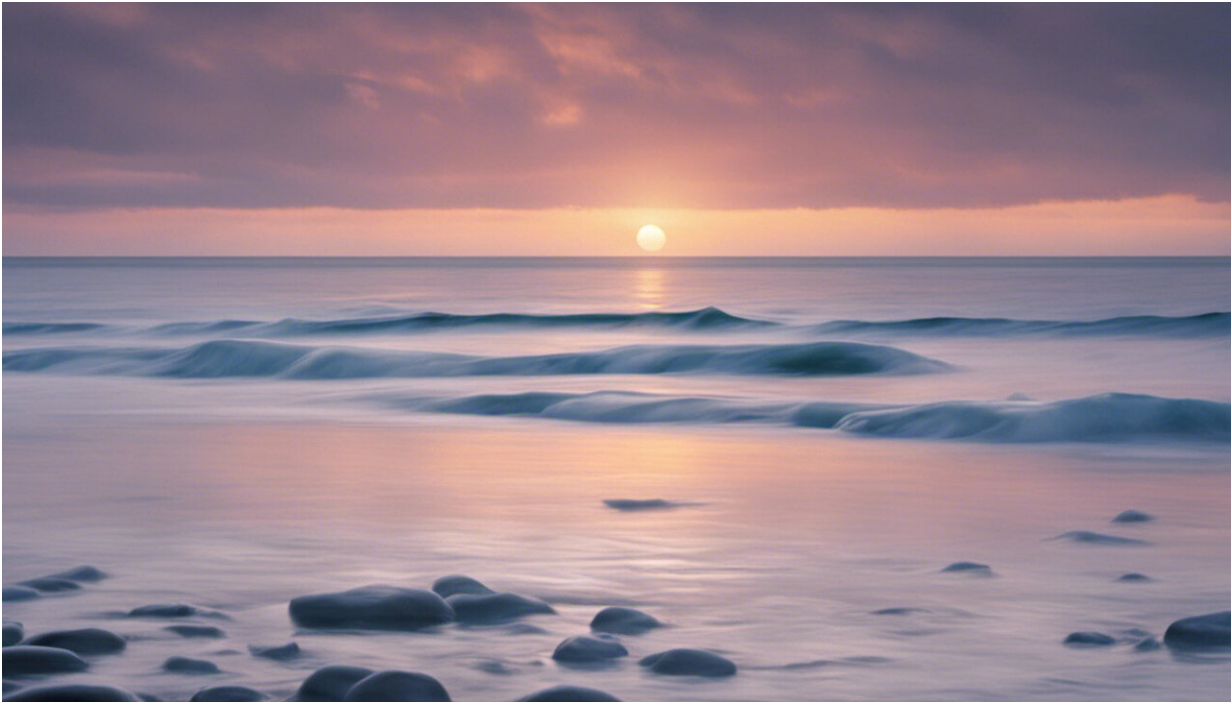


Fish in early childhood reduces risk of disease

October 4 2019, by Steinar Brandslet



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

It doesn't take that much fish for young children to reap big health benefits. Even eating fish just once a week yields good results.

Children should be introduced to [fish](#) or cod liver oil early in life, from when they are about a year old. That's because children who consume

fish early on show significantly reduced occurrences of eczema, wheezing and asthma at age six, as reported by their parents.

The reduction ranges from 28 to 40 percent fewer occurrences for the various conditions.

"We compared children who ate fish at least once a week until they were two years old with children who consumed less fish than that," says associate professor and first author Torbjørn Øien in NTNU's Department of Public Health and Nursing.

Researchers from St. Olavs hospital and NTNU conducted the study, which has now been published in MDPI.

All kinds are beneficial

The baseline for the study were figures from the pediatric allergy survey Prevention of Allergy among Children in Trondheim that started in 2000. Data from more than 4 000 families contributed to these new analyses, which investigated the relationship between the mother's or child's fish intake and the child's development of eczema, asthma and hay fever.

All of these [health](#) conditions have increased sharply in Norway since the 1950s. They have been linked to various changes in our lifestyle, including that the population as a whole is eating less fish.

"It seems that eating all types of fish provides a health benefit, not just fatty fish," says Melanie Rae Simpson, the senior author and a postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Public Health and Nursing.

Other family factors less influential

The authors have also taken into account other factors that may be involved, such as socio-economic status.

It could be that children from some social groups—such as having parents with [higher education](#) or high incomes—have health advantages regardless, due to multiple factors.

Perhaps these children simply have more fish in their diets, and the health benefits aren't due exclusively to their fish intake, but to several other influencing factors as well. The research team did what they could to account for these possible factors.

Several studies show health benefits

"In line with previous meta-analyses of several studies, we found that consuming fish at the age of one year seems to reduce the risk of eczema, asthma and wheezing at the age of six. This is more significant than the mother's intake of fish and [cod liver oil](#) during pregnancy and breastfeeding or the child's intake at two years, which do not appear to have the same protective effect," says Øien.

One conclusion from the study is that we should increase [children's](#) fish intake in the first year of life to have a preventive effect against eczema and asthma.

More information: Torbjørn Øien, et al. Fish Consumption at One Year of Age Reduces the Risk of Eczema, Asthma and Wheeze at Six Years of Age, *Nutrients* (2019). [DOI: 10.3390/nu11091969](https://doi.org/10.3390/nu11091969)

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