



HEALTH

# Avoiding the See-Food Diet

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The holidays can be perilous when it comes to following the see-food diet — we see food, we eat it. But as divers, it’s important to maintain a certain level of health, even during the holidays when we may not be diving as much.



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By guest blogger Gretchen M. Ashton, CFT, SFT, SFN, NBFE

Most divers are starving after a dive — this is when the risk of succumbing to the see-food diet — overeating and making poor food choices — is high. Divers also tend to eat and drink in excess at dive club meetings and on vacation. Since it happens frequently, divers wishing to change these habits must be mindful and plan in advance.

## Say No to the See-Food Diet

Most dive charters include surface-interval snacks and sometimes lunch. Many are now serving sandwiches, hot soups, salads and fruit — all of which are better options for fueling diving than the traditional chips and cookies of the past. Ask your dive charter ahead of time about the food and beverages you’re going to be served. Drink plenty of water, avoid sugary drinks, and consider bringing electrolyte powders in reusable water bottles.

Liveboards, dive resorts and dive-club meetings at restaurants offer even more choices and can frequently accommodate special diets. Instead of thinking of your vacation as a dietary free for all, think of it as a spa holiday. Request healthy menus for the entire week in advance, and if you’ve got any special dietary needs, such as vegetarian, vegan, or gluten-free, let the liveboard or resort know far in advance. When hosting or attending dive-club meetings make sure to choose a venue with healthy options. If possible, move the meeting portion of the event to a non-food area or at least clear food from tables once the meal is finished. Removing food works for divers at home too. Keep food out of sight in cupboards, and don’t bring unhealthy foods home at all.

If you’re unsure what will be offered on board your boat or at your meeting, bringing a snack or lunch is always an alternative. Snacks are especially helpful when the timing of meal service does not align with diver hunger. A snack bar, piece of fruit or trail mix is often just enough to maintain physical energy and mental acuity on dive days. These can also help prevent the urgent fast food drive-through binge after shore diving, so keep them on hand in a cooler in the car.

Eating and hydrating before diving also helps prevent some post-dive hunger. Divers can best prepare for a day in the water by drinking cold water beginning a few hours before diving, and continuing to drink throughout the day and night, especially if they’re diving for a few days in a row. Meals consisting of about 30 percent lean protein, 55 percent low-glycemic carbohydrates, and 15 percent or less fat provide performance-based nutrition for divers. Eating these nutrient ratios consistently for one to three days before diving and on diving days helps divers stay in their best shape and avoid the dreaded see-food diet.

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