

Nutritional Benefits of Eating Seaweed

Seaweeds are algae that grow along rocky shorelines. Alternative names in English are sea vegetables or sea greens. In Japanese common names include *wakame* and *nori*.

Seaweeds and leafy green vegetables have similar nutritional benefits.

Wakame is nutrient-dense, low in fat as well as an amazing source of omega-3s, which lowers the risk of heart disease, depression, and arthritis. Seaweed is rich in minerals and iodine, supports thyroid hormones and improves skin health. ⁽¹⁾ Scientific research support is presented in the following table.

Nutrition Benefits of Eating Seaweed: Scientific research Support			
	Ingredient	Beneficial effect	Reference
1.	Iodine and tyrosine	Good for the thyroid function	2, 3, 4, 5, 6
2.	Vitamins, minerals, fatty acids	Iodine (above), iron, calcium, omega-3 fats, B12	7, 8, 9, 10
3.	Antioxidants	Make free radicals less reactive	11, 12, 13, 14
4.	Fiber and polysaccharides	Good for gut health	15, 16, 17

Source: Healthline, ⁽¹⁸⁾ Conceptasia, June 2023

Seaweeds are normally classified into three groups by the leaf color: green, brown and red. Shallow waters receive a lot of sunlight, and the algae are green. Next is brown. Red algae are found in the depths.

Examples of the Different types of Edible Seaweed		
1.	Green algae	chlorella, spirulina, green nori (sea lettuce), umibudo
2.	Brown algae	wakame, kombu, hijiki, mekabu, arame
3.	Red algae	nori, dulse, Irish moss

Note: Kelp is a commonly used word with flexible meanings. In North America, it usually means brown algae.
Source: Conceptasia, June 2023

Some examples of seaweeds in Japanese cuisine follow.

Nori is the “sushi seaweed”, and is particularly dense in protein, around 40% protein by weight.

Kombu is the seaweed in miso soup, being one of the main ingredients of dashi, used as the broth.

Wakame most commonly appears in Japanese salads.

Mekabu is the edible part of the wakame plant root. In Japan it is sold both fresh and dried.

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