

# What good is a whale?

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*Do Eskimo people really need whale in their diet?*

*First of all, it takes money to purchase food at the store. It takes time, energy and fuel to get a whale. One whale can feed lots of people.*

*From a health standpoint, about three and one-half ounces of baleen whale flesh provides 70% of the U.S. RDA (Recommended Daily Allowance) for iron. That means that you only need a little over one-half cup of whale flesh to get the iron you need every day. Since about 30 people out of every 100 people in rural Alaska are anemic, whale is a rich source of the mineral that prevents anemia. The same amount of ground beef only provides about 15% of the U.S. RDA for iron. The only purchased food that is equal to the iron content of whale flesh is calves liver.*

*Another nutrient that is found in this sea mammal is riboflavin. Except for calves liver, most riboflavin is obtained from milk products. Since most Eskimos do not drink much milk, whale is an important source of this nutrient. Three and one-half ounces of whale provide 50% of the U.S. RDA for riboflavin. In addition, whale provides 40% of the U.S. RDA in both protein and niacin.*

*For those of you fortunate enough to be able to eat whale, about one cup full of whale flesh meets your nutrient needs for one day in four essential nutrients: protein, riboflavin, niacin and iron.*

*Muktuk is another way that whale can be eaten. This provides some nutrients with lots of calories. One-half cup of muktuk provides the calories equal to about three and one-half cans of soda pop. You need calories to have energy for work. The best part about the calories provided by muktuk is that the muktuk also provides some protein, vitamin A, thimine and niacin. Soda pop only provides calories and carbohydrates.*

*From a health standpoint, whale is an important source of nutrients in the Eskimo diet.*