

Negative side effects and precautions with fish oil supplements

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A safe dose

The American government agency, Food and Drug Administration, declared that a dose of 3 grams (3000 mg) of omega-3 daily may be considered as generally safe. A panel of specialists of the American Heart Association published a study showing that a daily dose of 8 grams (8000 mg) omega-3 daily is acceptable. It would very difficult to take 8 grams of fish oil as most supplements have less than 1g of omega 3.

Fish after taste

The most frequent side effect of omega-3 supplements is a fishy aftertaste. However, many modern fish oil supplements are designed to minimise the fishy aftertaste. Taking the capsules at the beginning of a meal helps minimise the fishy aftertaste. In Whelehans, I find MorEPA[®] tends not to cause aftertaste issue as it undergoes a special purification process (formula A1) in order to eliminate the fish taste as much as possible. However, if you are very sensitive to the taste of fish, I suggest you use PlusEPA[®] as it has the least issues with aftertaste.

Digestion

Some fish oil supplements, when taken in high dosages, can result in stomach and intestinal problems. Some people may experience mild intestinal problems (i.e. more than one bowel movement per day, running or liquid bowel movement) when they suddenly take high dosages of fish oils. If that is the case, it is advisable to lower the dose for one or two weeks then increase slowly. MorEPA[®] is a fish oil supplement which is designed to cause very few digestion problems. Digestion type side effects are even rarer with PlusEPA[®].

Coagulation of the blood

In rare cases, the intake of high dosages (more than 3 grams per day) of omega-3 fatty acids could result in bruises. Similar to aspirin, omega-3 fatty acids have an inhibiting effect on the coagulation of the blood. Generally, this blood thinning effect is considered a benefit because it counteracts the formation of blood clots, thereby lowering the risks of heart attack or stroke. Yet, it could constitute a problem for people who are prone to getting bruises or for individuals who take anti-coagulant medication (blood thinners).

Which fish oil to choose?

For people who do not eat sufficient fish oils, I would recommend a fish oil supplement called MorEPA[®] as it contains the highest level of pure omega 3 fatty acids (EPA and DHA) of any fish oil supplement on the market. PlusEPA[®] is a potent omega 3 supplement specifically designed to ease symptoms of mood disorders such as depression and anxiety. For those suffering from joint pain and inflammatory conditions like arthritis, a fish oil supplement called Lyprinol[®] gives relief in many people who try it as it has more potent anti-inflammatory effects than other fish oils.

Disclaimer: Supplements are not meant as a substitute for a balanced diet.