

Fish Oils and Omega-3

Fish oil is recommended for a healthy diet because it contains the omega-3 fatty acids, eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), precursors to eicosanoids that reduce inflammation throughout the body. Fish do not actually produce omega-3 fatty acids, but instead accumulate them from either consuming microalgae that produce these fatty acids, as is the case with fish like herring and sardines, or, as is the case with fatty predatory fish, by eating prey fish that have accumulated omega-3 fatty acids from microalgae.

Cod liver oil is a form of fish oil derived from liver of cod fish. It has high levels of the omega-3 fatty acids, EPA and DHA, and very high levels of vitamin A, vitamin D and vitamin E.

Omega 3 fatty acids are primarily found in oily fish such as salmon, fresh tuna, mackerel, herring, sardines and pilchards. We should eat two portions of fish per week, one of them oily. Most of the fish oils used for Omega purposes are originating from Peru, Chile and Morocco because the Omega-3 levels in the fish caught in these areas are higher (around 30%) than in Scandinavian and other fish oils (around 20%).

The American Heart Association recommends the consumption of 1g of fish oil daily, preferably by eating fish, for patients with coronary heart disease. Flaxseed oil which is also known as linseed oil is six times richer than most fish oils in and its oil are perhaps the most widely available botanical source of omega 3.

Health benefits of Omega 3

The Heart

People with certain circulatory problems, such as varicose veins, benefit from fish oil because it contains EPA and DHA.

Fish oil stimulates blood circulation, increases the breakdown of fibrin, a compound involved in clot and scar formation, and additionally has been shown to reduce blood pressure. There is strong scientific evidence that omega fatty acids reduce blood triglyceride levels and regular intake reduces the risk of secondary and primary heart attack. Healthy women who said they ate fish five times a week or more had a 45 percent lower risk of dying of heart disease over the next 16 years than healthy women who ate fish less than once a month, according to the Journal of the American Medical Association. An editorial in the May 15, 2000 issue of the American Journal of Cardiology claimed the time had come to add fish and fish oil supplements to the list of standard treatments of coronary heart disease.

EPA and DHA in Omega 3 has been so effective in saving lives by reducing triglycerides, it is now available on prescription to prevent heart attacks. The prescription form is called Omacor®

The brain

There is evidence that omega 3 fatty acids supplementation might be helpful in cases of depression and anxiety. Studies report highly significant improvement from omega 3 fatty acids supplementation alone and in conjunction with medication. Research has shown a link between the amount of a fish people in different countries eat and the level of depression. In Japan, where people eat on average 70kg of fish a year, the rate of depression is 0.12%. Whereas in New Zealand, where people eat only 18kg of fish a year, the rate of depression is almost 50 times higher.

It is thought that omega 3 may help your brain work more efficiently, so serotonin, which can boost your mood, has more of an effect on you. Although there is no conclusive evidence yet, some research has shown that omega 3 reduces your risk of Alzheimer's.

DHA has been shown in research to aid memory and concentration. Again, there is no conclusive evidence, but Omega-3 supplementation is thought to be beneficial in preventing Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a condition that affects 3-5% of children.

The eyes

Recent research in the University of Melbourne showed that Omega-3 reduced age related macular degeneration, a major cause of blindness in the over 50's.

Arthritis

Foods rich in omega-3 are believed to have an anti-inflammatory effect, which may reduce the pain associated with inflamed joints. In addition to treating inflammation, Omega 3 has been shown to reduce the joint stiffness and pain in patients who have taken Omega 3 supplements. Lyprinol® is a highly potent omega 3 supplement available in Whelehans. Trials have shown that Lyprinol® has 200 to 300 times more anti-inflammatory potency than other Omega 3 supplements.

Which is more important: Omega 3, 6 or 9?

Omega-6 and 9's can be found abundantly in many of our common vegetable cooking oils, but not olive oil. Omega 6 and 9 are common ingredients in many of the foods we eat. Western diets tend to be lacking in Omega 3 so it is more important to supplement with Omega 3 than Omega 6 and 9. This is especially important for those who do not eat much fish.

MorEPA® (Smart Fats)

MorEPA® capsules are tasty and chewable. This makes them suitable for people who do not like the fishy taste of normal fish oil capsules, or for people who have difficulty swallowing pills. The richest and purest source of Omega 3 EPA fish oil you can buy. One 1,000 mg capsule contains 535 mg EPA (approx) and 87 mg of DHA (approx) – pure essential Omega 3 fatty acids. The capsules are free from odour and any fishy taste due to the addition of natural lemon.

Just one capsule per day gives you the entire Omega 3 EPA you need. Instead of taking three to five capsules of fish oil a day, you only have to take one single capsule of MorEPA®. This means you can avoid the surplus fat that you would get from consuming ordinary fish oil.

At Whelehans Pharmacy, we recommend it for students studying for exams as the EPA in MorEPA reduces stress levels while DHA aids memory and concentration. MorEPA Mini® is a strawberry flavour omega 3 supplement for children from age five upwards. It can be mixed with food and drinks such as yogurt and fruit juices. MorEPA Chewable® is an orange taste omega 3 chewable softgel also suitable for children over five. Research has shown that students who took MorEPA fish oils were able to perform better at mental tasks.

For comprehensive and free health advice and information call in to Whelehans, log on to www.whelehans.ie or dial 04493 34591.