



Omega-3 Fatty Acids

What are Omega-3 Fatty Acids? They are a form of fat in your diet, one of 4 basic types of fat that the body gets from food. Cholesterol, saturated fat, and monounsaturated fat are the other types. Omega-3 Fatty Acids are found primarily in cold-water fish.

Why 'essential'? Omega-3's are termed essential fatty acids because the body needs them to maintain good health. However, they are not made by the body and must be obtained from food or supplements.

What are the different types? Two of the main omega-3 fatty acids are eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexanoic acid (DHA), both found primarily in oily cold-water fish such as tuna and salmon. The third type is alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), found mostly in leafy green vegetables and flaxseed oils. All three of these omega-3's are important.

What are the health benefits?

Many studies have shown the following:

Heart Health:

- ◆ Lowers triglyceride levels
- ◆ Reduces death by any cause
- ◆ Reduces blood pressure in patients with high blood pressure
- ◆ Keeps irregular heartbeat stable thereby reducing the risk of sudden death

Rheumatoid arthritis:

- ◆ Decreases morning stiffness
- ◆ Reduces number of tender, swollen joints

Where do I get my Omega-3's?

- ◆ Cold-water Fish: tuna, salmon, herring, sardines, halibut, bluefish.
- ◆ Plant sources: walnuts, canola oil, flaxseed, leafy green vegetables.
- ◆ Supplements: cod liver oil, standard fish oil, omega-3 fatty acid concentrates.

How much do I take? If I have...

- ◆ No heart disease: Two servings of fatty fish a week along with other foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids or supplements that contain 1g of omega-3 fatty acids daily.
- ◆ A History of heart disease: At least one serving of fatty fish daily or supplements that contain 1g of omega-3 fatty acids daily.
- ◆ High Triglycerides: Supplements that contain 3 grams of omega-3 fatty acids daily (consult your doctor before taking).
- ◆ Rheumatoid Arthritis: Supplements that contain 3 grams of omega-3 fatty acids daily (consult your doctor before taking).

What are the possible side effects?

Fishy aftertaste, burping, nausea, bloating. There are no known drug interactions.

What about mercury in fish?

Women and young children need to be careful not to eat too much mercury. Refer to www.epa.gov/ost/fish for up to date official recommendations. A summary appears below.

◆ Do not eat Shark, Swordfish, King Mackerel, or Tilefish.

◆ Eat up to but no more than 12 ounces per week (2 average meals) of fish or shellfish low in mercury (salmon, shrimp, canned tuna, catfish). Children can have up to 6 ounces of fish per week (1 average meal).