

Please Take One!



SUPPLEMENT OF THE MONTH: FISH OIL

What is fish oil?

Fish oils contain long chain, polyunsaturated fats called omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids contain EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid). Our bodies cannot produce omega-3 fatty acids; they must be consumed. However, DHA can be converted to EPA in the body.

Where is it found?

You can obtain fish oils either by eating fish, especially salmon, mackerel, tuna, sardines, herring, sturgeon, trout, bluefish, and anchovy or by consuming supplements. If you eat fish, there is about 1 g of omega-3 fatty acids in every 3.5 ounces of fish. It is best to prepare the fish either by baking or broiling since fried fish appears to cancel out the benefits.

If you take supplements, it is recommended not to use in amounts greater than 3g/day because EPA and DHA thin the blood and may increase the risk of bleeding.

What are the benefits?

Omega 3-fatty acids have anti-inflammatory and antithrombotic effects, which have cardiovascular benefits. They can reduce triglyceride levels by 20-50%. There is evidence that EPA and DHA may improve age-related macular degeneration, asthma, depression, psoriasis, borderline personality disorder, ADHD, Alzheimer's, menstrual pain, dry eyes, and glaucoma. They may also lower blood pressure and help prevent heart disease and stroke in people with CAD (Coronary Artery Disease).

EPA can prevent the blood from clotting easily and may also reduce pain and swelling. DHA plays role in development of eye and nerve tissue and may decrease thickness of blood.

Are there interactions with medications?

Fish oils may decrease blood pressure, so taking antihypertensive medications with fish oil may lower blood pressure too much. They also slow blood clotting so taking them with anticoagulant/antiplatelet drugs like aspirin, Plavix or heparin may increase the chance of bleeding. Also some evidence suggests that birth control pills may interfere with the triglyceride lowering effect. Fish oil may also reduce Vitamin E levels.

Side effects are mild and may be decreased by consuming fish oils with meals or freezing them before ingestion, or taking them in the evening before bedtime.