



Omega-3 Fatty Acid

WHAT IS IT?

Omega-3 fatty acids are special fats that must be obtained through food or supplements. Certain plants are high in Omega 3 (alpha-linolenic acid, or ALA) but this must be converted into a form the body can utilize so most supplements contain the animal forms: eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA).

Omega-3 fatty acids reduce inflammation and lower triglycerides and may have beneficial effects on blood pressure and depression. DHA is also used in large quantities in the brain and the eyes and is essential for healthy growth and development in children.

WHO MIGHT CONSIDER TAKING THIS?

Most American diets provide at least ten times more omega-6 than omega-3 fatty acids, which is not a healthy balance. To help rebalance the diet, most people need more omega-3 fatty acids. Adding cold-water oily fish two times a week is one approach, and a daily omega-3 supplement may also be helpful if fish is not eaten regularly. For vegetarians, seeds and nuts, especially walnuts, are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids.

Your healthcare provider may recommend omega-3 supplements to help with any of the following:

- Lowering triglycerides levels in the blood
- High blood pressure
- General heart health
- Depression or bipolar disorder
- Rheumatoid arthritis

PREPARATIONS AND DOSAGE

Dose:

- **General heart health:** 1–2 grams of EPA+DHA per day; however, studies have yielded mixed data, and it is best to talk to your healthcare provider about whether you should supplement.
- **Elevated triglycerides:** up to 4 grams EPA+DHA per day.
- **High Blood pressure:** 2grams per day of EPA/DHA
- **RA:** 2g per day of EPA/DHA
- **Bipolar:** 2g per day of EPA/DHA
- **Depression:** 1.5g of EPA/DHA

Most fish oil supplements in the U.S. are free of detectable levels of mercury, solvents and other contaminants. Good quality fish oil supplements should not smell “fishy”—a sign of rancidity. Vegetarian omega-3 capsules made from algae are also available.

They should be taken with your biggest meal of the day to improve absorption. Fish oil can be stored in the freezer or refrigerator and taken frozen or very cold to help reduce burping that some people experience.

CONCERNS?

Omega-3 fatty acid supplementation has been associated with an increased risk for atrial fibrillation, an arrhythmia that can lead to stroke. Talk to your doctor before starting an omega-3 supplement. Omega-3 fatty acid from food, on the other hand, does not increase risk of atrial fibrillation and decreases risk for heart disease.

Another adverse effect includes increased risk of bleeding and bruising although this is not common. You will be asked to stop omega-3 supplementation if going for surgery or other invasive procedure. Always check with your health care provider if you take a drug to reduce blood clotting like Xarelto, Eliquis, or Coumadin, if you have an inherited bleeding disorder, or if you are on chemotherapy.