



Center for Integrative Medicine

Dietary Supplements: Fish Oil - Omega 3 Fatty Acid

Omega-3 fatty acids are essential because we cannot make them from other compounds. Two omega-3 fatty acids, EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) are used for optimal function of the nerves, the cell membranes, and in regulating inflammation and immune function.

Fish oil supplements, rich in EPA and DHA, are used to treat patients with high triglycerides, heart disease, depression, menstrual pain, rheumatoid arthritis, ADHD, asthma, anxiety, and allergies. See the US National Library of Medicine site for more information: http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/patient-fishoil.html

Good dietary sources of EPA and DHA include: anchovies, salmon (wild contains fewer dioxins), sardines, bluefin tuna, white albacore tuna in water, herring, rainbow trout, mussels, and wild oysters. Some fish contains high levels of **mercury** and dioxins, but <u>mercury contamination has not been a problem in > 90% fish oil supplements tested</u>. Mercury is concentrated in larger fish. See the US EPA web site on mercury advisories for fish: www.epa.gov/fishadvisories/advice/ High quality fish oil supplements do not contain mercury, PCBs, or dioxin. Grass-finished beef and lamb has more omega-3 fatty acids than grain finished meat.

Our bodies inefficiently make EPA and DHA from another fatty acid, ALA (alpha-linolenic acid), which is found in plants. Flax seed contains the highest concentration of ALA of any plant food; black currant seeds, chia seeds, hemp seeds, walnuts, canola oil, and soybean oil also contain ALA.

According to the US Institute of Medicine, the Adequate Intake (AI) of Omega-3 fatty acids is:

Adults: 1,600 milligrams (mg) daily for males and 1,100 mgs daily for females

The **American Heart Association** recommends that adults with heart disease who don't eat fish regularly should take a daily supplement containing 1,000 mg of omega-3 fats.

Some experts recommend at least 2000 mg daily of the combination of EPA+DHA (this is what Dr. Kemper takes).

Omega-3 fatty acids are generally **safe.** Some people are allergic to fish and some dislike the taste of fish. Some people have problems with upset stomach, diarrhea or burping with fish oil supplements. Earlier concerns about high doses of fish oil increasing the risk of bruising or bleeding have not held up in modern randomized trials. However, please talk with your doctor about your dose of fish oil if you are take daily doses of aspirin, warfarin (Coumadin®) or heparin, clopidogrel (Plavix®), ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®) or naproxen (Naprosyn®, Aleve®).

Dr. Kemper usually recommends a product that contains both EPA and DHA.

Typical doses are for the COMBINATION of EPA+DHA: 500 mg for 6- 12 year olds; 1000-3000 for teens and adults

Liquid preparations: Carlson's (1 tsp contains 800 mg EPA + 500 mg DHA)

Or Nordic Naturals Ultimate Omega Liquid (1/2 tsp contains 813 mg EPA + 563 mg DHA)

Gel: Coromega Omega-3 Squeeze (each packet contains 350 mg EPA + 230 mg DHA)

Capsules: GNC Triple Strength Enteric coated (2 caps contain 1294 EPA + 506 DHA)

Nordic Natural EPA Xtra (2 capsules contain 1,060 mg EPA + 274 mg DHA) or

Solgar Omega-3 "950" (2 capsules contain 1084 EPA and 816 DHA) or

Trader Joe's concentrated, molecularly distilled (500 mg – 600 mg of EPA+DHA per pill)

Tip: Keeping it very cold reduces the flavor. Take it with food to improve absorption and reduce heartburn.

READ LABELS carefully! For more information, see http://www.consumerlab.com/results/omega3.asp

For vegetarians: These are a selection of some flax seed oil products that have met quality testing standards set by ConsumerLab, http://www.consumerlab.com/results/flaxseed.asp. I prefer whole or ground flax seeds to any oil.

Product Name / Distributor	Strength	Manufacturer
Nature's Bounty® Organic Flaxseed Oil	4.650 mg/ 5mL	Nature's Bounty, Inc.
Vitamin World® Organic Flaxseed Oil	4650 mg/ 5mL	Vitamin World, Inc

www.wakehealth.edu/CIM - See Quick Link to Dietary Supplements