



## Omega-3 Fatty Acid

### WHAT IS IT?

The omega-3 fatty acids are essential nutrients for humans, which means that body can not make them, they must be obtained through food or supplements. They are found in the diet as alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). Each serves a different function in the body. Both EPA and DHA can be obtained directly through foods, but the body needs to convert ALA into EPA and then DHA for it to be used.

Two general categories of Omega fatty acids exist. Omega-3 fatty acids reduce inflammation and lower triglycerides, and may have beneficial effects on blood pressure and depression. A good example of an omega-3 fatty acid is DHA, which is the major polyunsaturated fatty acid found in the brain and the retina. It is essential for healthy brain and eye development in the growing fetus.

The other type of omega fatty acid is the omega-6 fatty acid, which is more often associated with increased inflammatory effects. Many processed foods contain omega-6 fatty acids.

### WHY SHOULD I 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.

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

- Lowering triglycerides and general heart health
- Depression or bipolar disorder
- Rheumatoid arthritis

### HOW DO I TAKE IT?

**DOSE:** Your health care provider will recommend the dose that is right for you. Common recommendations include:

- General heart health: 1-2 grams of EPA+DHA per day
- Elevated triglycerides: 4 grams EPA+DHA per day

Note: Fish oil supplements available in the U.S. are relatively free of detectable levels of mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and organochlorine pesticides, as they are molecularly distilled. 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?

Possible adverse effects include anti-coagulant (clotting) properties. However, studies have shown fish oil to be safe at doses even as high as 16 grams per day. Always check with your health care provider if you take a drug to reduce blood clotting like Coumadin, or if you have an inherited bleeding disorder, or are on chemotherapy, or if you will be having surgery or other procedure.

**Vegan/Vegetarians:** There are vegetarian forms of DHA available in the marketplace made from algae.

Make sure to ask your health care provider exactly how and when you should take this product.

### My Health Care Provider's Notes:

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