

Omega 3 Fish Oil

Omega 3 fish oil is produced by cold-distillation of the body oils obtained from fish, particularly cold-water fish. Undistilled fish oil includes Omega 6 and Omega 9 oils, and cholesterol. Cold-distillation removes all Omega 6 and some Omega 9 oils.

A study published by J. Maroon and J. Bost in Surgical Neurology (Vol. 65, pp 326-331, April 2006) demonstrated that Omega 3 fish oil at 3000 mg per day (1.2 to 2.4 grams of DHA +EPA) is as effective at blocking pain and inflammation as the maximum dose of ibuprofen (2400 mg per day). Although there is no research at higher doses, patients report stronger effects at doses of Omega 3 fish oil up to 6000 mg per day.

The known side effects of Omega 3 fish oil include

1. Lowering LDL cholesterol (the so-called bad cholesterol) and triglycerides
2. Raising HDL cholesterol
3. Increasing vascular flexibility
4. Improving retinal function
5. Improving brain function,
6. Blocking or slowing macular degeneration
7. Possibly slowing the progression of Alzheimer's disease
8. Decreasing the lung reactivity of asthma
9. Improving movement in the GI tract
10. Burping and increased gastroesophageal reflux.

Cardiologists have recommended lower dose Omega 3 (1000 mg per day) for a number of years because of its positive effects on cholesterol and the vascular system.

The best way to avoid burping and reflux after taking Omega 3 fish oil is to take it at the beginning of a meal and avoid warm or hot liquids until the end of the meal. An additional helpful trick is to put the fish oil in the freezer.

Omega 3 fish oil is available as a liquid and in 500 and 1000 mg capsules from many companies. Look for those that say either "tested for" or "certified free of" PCBs, mercury and heavy metals.

Some have recommended taking Omega 6 fish oil along with Omega 3 fish oil. However I do not recommend this for two reasons. First, most Omega 6 oil *causes* inflammation. Second, there is plenty of Omega 6 oil already present in our diet (it is found in most vegetable oils). The problem is that there is not enough Omega 3 oil in our diet to balance all the Omega 6.

Although Flax seed oil also has an Omega 3 component that lowers cholesterol, it does not have any anti-inflammatory properties. Therefore I cannot recommend it for those who are trying to control pain and inflammation as well as generally improve health (see the listed side effects above).