

The Health Benefits of Omega-3 DHA



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With all the health benefits linked to omega-3s for both you and your family, it's no surprise they are being added to many everyday foods. They can be found in products such as milk, yogurt and cheese that are enriched with DHA—a specific omega-3—to take extra advantage of the goodness of this nutrient.

Benefits Galore

Omega-3 fats are important during all stages of life.

Omega-3s, especially DHA, are crucial for the healthy brain development of infants and children, when its growth is at its fastest and most crucial stage. DHAs pass from mother to baby during pregnancy and breastfeeding, so it's especially important for expectant and new mothers to make sure they get enough in their diet. Once toddlers switch to homogenized milk they need another source of DHA—thus the importance of fish and enriched foods.

Not only do DHAs help develop healthy eyes in babies and children, but low intakes have been associated with numerous neurological and visual system problems. And the benefits don't stop in childhood. In adults, DHAs are strongly associated with lowering the risk of heart attack and stroke.

And if all that's not enough evidence as to why you should include omega-3s in your family's daily diet, studies also suggest that the anti-inflammatory properties of these fatty acids may reduce the stiffness and pain of joints afflicted with arthritis.

What are Omega-3s?

Omega-3s are a type of polyunsaturated fat known to be good for health. The three main types are ALA, DHA and EPA. ALA is an essential fatty acid, which means our bodies need it, but we can't produce it on our own, so we need to get it from the foods we eat. Walnuts, flax seeds and canola oil are good sources.

Our bodies can produce DHA and EPA from the ALA we consume, however, this is not as efficient as getting them directly from food, therefore, it is important to consume DHA and EPA through our diet. These omega-3s can be found in fatty fish such as salmon, sardines and mackerel. Research shows that both DHA and EPA are important in many areas, including heart health and brain health.

THE EASY SOLUTION

While there is no official recommendation in terms of how much is enough, experts suggest a daily intake for healthy adults of DHA plus EPA in the range of 250 to 500 mg from their diet to benefit from the protective effect against heart disease. Also, a daily intake of 100 to 150 mg is proposed for children to assist with brain development.

DHAs are found mainly in fatty fish. Current recommendations for Canadians include 2 servings of fish per week. In addition to fish, DHA-enriched milk products make a lot of sense because they are more likely to appear on the menu on an everyday basis, just one more reason to benefit from at least 2 to 4 servings of milk products a day as recommended by Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating.

Build omega-3s into your routine

- Sprinkle walnuts on your yogurt and ground flax seeds in your baking.
- Try to have a couple of servings of higher-fat fish for dinner every week such as salmon, mackerel and sardines.
- Scramble up a couple of omega-3 enriched eggs for breakfast.
- When you go grocery shopping, bring home DHA-enriched milk, yogurt and cheese and enjoy some each and every day.
- For new easy ways to enjoy DHA-enriched milk products, use them in your regular recipes or check out some of ours at the website below.

