

# Balancing Your Omegas

Rebalance your diet and Omega-3 levels to slow or prevent health complications.

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Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids are vital to the body in order to maintain specific functions and to keep the body healthy. For instance, both are known to lower LDL cholesterol (the bad cholesterol) and lower the risk of cardiovascular disease. Unfortunately, these fatty acids cannot be made by the body, and must come from our diets. Once these substances are ingested, the body converts them into useful molecules, but there is a catch! Omega-3s and Omega-6s compete with each other for utilization in the body, so an overabundance of Omega-6s will interfere with the body's ability to use Omega-3s. University of Maryland Medical Center reports that the typical American diet contains 14 to 25 times more Omega-6 fatty acids than omega-3 fatty acids. This is mainly due to an increased presence of vegetable oils and a decrease in fish consumption (Ehrlich, 2011).



An imbalance in your Omegas can lead to inflammation of the body's organs, blood coagulation, and blood vessel constriction. Re-balancing diets and increasing Omega-3 levels can slow the growth of plaque in blood vessels, lower blood pressure, aid in the prevention of irregular heartbeats, and decrease the

risk of heart attacks attributed to blood clots (Yoquinto, 2012). In order to obtain Omega-3s, most people should eat small portions of oily fish twice a week, and people with coronary heart disease should eat fish daily, or talk to a doctor about trying Omega-3 supplements (American Heart Association, 2011). These essential acids are found in high concentrations in the brain and may be crucial for cognitive tasks such as memory, problem-solving and thinking as well as behavioral and mood functions. A deficiency of Omega-3 in the body can lead to fatigue, dry skin, poor memory, depression, mood swings, heart problems and poor blood circulation (Kassem, 2011).

Canola oil, flax seed oil and walnuts contain some, but not all, of the Omega-3 fatty acids. Others can only be obtained from fish such as herring, salmon, sardines, oysters, trout and tuna, or through supplements. Sources of Omega-6s include soy, safflower, corn, and sesame oil (Yoquinto, 2012). One way to skew your ratio of Omega fatty acids towards Omega-3s is to cook with olive oil, which does not contain Omega-3s or -6s, instead of vegetable oils like corn oil. The benefits of consuming Omega-3 fatty acids will occur over time and may take up to 8 weeks of daily usage to emerge. Most sources should be taken with a meal, preferably at dinner. However, it is important to note that flaxseed supplements can slow down absorption of some medications so they should be taken separately and with the consultation of your physician. (Kassem, 2011).

Omega-3 Fatty Acids Can be Used to Reduce Symptoms Associated With:

- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Heart Disease and High Blood Pressure
- High Cholesterol
- Osteoporosis
- Depression and Bipolar Disorder
- Menstrual Pain

## References

<sup>1</sup> Ehrlich, S. (2011). *Omega-3 Fatty Acids*. [ONLINE] Available at [umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/supplement/omega3-fatty-acids](http://umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/supplement/omega3-fatty-acids). [Last Accessed 7/24/13].

<sup>2</sup> Kassem, N. (2011) *The Best Time To Take Omega-3*. [ONLINE] Available at [www.livestrong.com/article/502625-the-best-time-to-take-omega-3/#ixzz2a1bt6yU1](http://www.livestrong.com/article/502625-the-best-time-to-take-omega-3/#ixzz2a1bt6yU1). [Last Accessed 7/23/13].

<sup>3</sup>Yoquinto, L. (2012). *The Truth About Omega-3 Fatty Acids* [ONLINE] Available at [www.livescience.com/36169-truth-omega-3-fatty-acids.html](http://www.livescience.com/36169-truth-omega-3-fatty-acids.html). [Last Accessed 7/24/13].

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