

OMEGA FATTY ACIDS

THE "ESSENTIALS":

Otherwise known as "essential" fatty acids, these fats are important for numerous metabolic functions in our body, but can only be obtained from food (ie. NOT made/created by your own body). There are two types of omega fatty acids which you need, Omega 3 and Omega 6. There is also an Omega 9 fatty acid which our bodies can make, but is also found in food such as canola and sunflower oil. Why the different numbers? Chemistry. The number tells you the position of the first double bond in the chain of carbons that make up a fat. Why does that matter to you? The position of the double bond changes the shape of the molecule, which means it acts in different ways on your metabolism. Also, since these fats have a double bond, it means they fall under the category of "polyunsaturated" fats.

OMEGA 3 FUNCTIONS

- There are actually 3 forms of Omega 3 Alpha-linolenic acid which comes from plant foods. Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) both found in animal based foods like fish and fortified eggs.
- Omega 3 is a structural component of cell membranes - important for making vessel walls flexible and lowering cardiovascular disease risk
- DHA is essential for eye health
- DHA is also found in high concentrations in your brain so there is hope it could relate to decreased risk of Alzheimer's with adequate consumption
- Higher intakes of Omega 3 relates to lower serum triglycerides and improve heart disease risk

OMEGA 3 Food Sources

Pregnant or nursing women and children under 12 should choose fish low in mercury. (Indicated with * below.)

- Flaxseed
- Chia Seeds
- Walnuts
- Canola Oil
- Soybean Oil
- Salmon*
- Herring
- Sardines
- Trout
- Crab*
- Tuna*
- Catfish*

OMEGA 6 FUNCTIONS

- There are two forms of Omega 6, Linoleic acid from plants and arachidonic acid from animal foods.
- The standard American diet provides up to 10 times more Omega 6 than Omega 3 fatty acids - many believe a healthy diet should be more balanced between the two
- Omega 6 plays a role in inflammatory processes in the body. Too much may contribute to increased cancer, heart disease risk.

OMEGA 6 Food Sources

- Safflower Oil
- Sunflower Seeds
- Pine Nuts
- Sunflower Oil
- Corn Oil
- Soybean Oil
- Pecans
- Brazil Nuts
- Sesame Oil
- Meat

How much do I need?

- You should eat about 1 gram of Omega 3 fatty acid per day.
- The American Heart Association recommends consuming 2 servings (8 ounces) of fish high in Omega 3 each week.
- Adequate intake of Omega 6 in adults is 17 grams per day for men and 12 grams for women.