

# Fish Oil



**Claims, Benefits:** Prevents heart disease, decreases inflammation, decreases triglycerides plus many other claims.

**Bottom Line:** Fish oil contains heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Most of the time we would rather see you get essential nutrients by eating the foods that contains them because there are often other good things in the food that work together to make the nutrient more effective. In the case of fish however, when you eat a lot of it you are exposing yourself to an unsafe amount of mercury or other contaminants so we prefer that you get some of your omega-3s from Fish Oil Capsules rather than fish.

## **Here's who should consider taking fish-oil supplements:**

### **People who already have coronary artery disease, notably those who have had a heart attack.**

There is solid evidence that omega-3s can help protect them. Thus, the **American Heart Association (AHA) started recommending 1 gram a day of omega-3s**, preferably from fish, for these people, with their doctors' approval. That's the amount in a serving of fatty fish, such as 3 ounces of salmon. But most people don't eat fish every day, and many choose less-fatty fish (it takes 12 ounces of canned tuna or 7 ounces of flounder to supply 1 gram of omega-3s). Moreover, since fish may contain mercury, it is advised to limit fish intake to 12 ounces a week, on average. So to get enough omega-3s without going overboard on fish, people with heart disease should consider taking fish-oil supplements on days when they don't eat fish.

**Those with high triglycerides.** These fats in the blood increase the risk of heart disease. It's well known that omega-3s help lower triglycerides. The AHA recommends 2 to 4 grams a day from supplements for people with high triglycerides, but only under the care of a physician. (Fish oil can cause small increases in LDL so make sure your doctor knows that you are taking fish oil).

**Those with rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, or other auto-immune disorders.** Omega-3s may help relieve the inflammatory symptoms of such auto-immune diseases by suppressing the immune response. Thus, they can help reduce the joint pain and swelling of rheumatoid arthritis. The Arthritis Foundation says the supplements are worth trying. Clinical studies suggest about 3 grams of omega-3s a day.

**Those with depression or bi-polar disorders.** For reasons that are less clear, omega-3s seem to help depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia according to a limited number of double-blind trials. The combination of EPA plus the prescription drug fluoxetine (Prozac) was better than either EPA or fluoxetine alone for treating major depression in a short-term (8-week) study of 60 people. Fish oil has also been proposed for attention deficit disorder, borderline personality disorder, dyslexia and cognitive impairment, but as yet the supporting evidence for these uses remains preliminary.

## **Are Fish Oil capsules good for everybody?**

- Large doses of Fish Oil can decrease the ability of blood to clot. People with bleeding disorders, those taking anticoagulants (warfarin), and those with uncontrolled hypertension should not take fish oil supplements without talking to their physicians.
- Large doses of fish oil may suppress the immune system. Thus, supplements may be risky for those with weakened immune systems. What's a "large dose"? One definition is 3 grams or more a day, but no one really knows what the cutoff point is.
- Large doses can increase blood glucose levels in people with diabetes.
- Large doses can cause nausea, diarrhea, belching, and a bad taste in the mouth.

## Should I worry that the supplements contain contaminants or don't contain what they say that they do?

A 2008 test by *Consumer Labs* of top-selling supplements was reassuring on both counts, even for the least expensive brands, but that doesn't mean that the next batches will be okay—or that other brands on the market are. The 2008 test by ConsumerLab.com found no detectable levels of mercury in 51 supplements containing Omega-3s.

## How do I know how much fish oil to take?

When choosing a fish oil capsule you need to read the small print. What you are interested in getting is actually the Omega-3s which are found in the DHA and EPA portion of the fish oil. A capsule may say that it contains 1000mg of fish oil but there may only be only 180mg of EPA and 120mg of DHA actually only providing 300mg of Omega-3s per 1000 mg capsule. Not all fish oil capsules contain the same concentration of Omega-3s in them. The ones with higher concentrations of DHA and EPA are preferred. Cod Liver Oil contains omega-3s but it also contains Vitamin A and Vitamin D. This can be a problem in that you can get too much Vitamin A and D in your attempt to take large quantities of Omega-3s so it is not a good choice for therapeutic doses.

## Fish Oil Compliance Tips:

Take your fish oil capsules with cold beverages to help avoid burping fish. Some sources suggest refrigerating or freezing the capsules but this is probably not necessary to help prevent the fish burps. Fish oil, like any oil can become rancid over time. Check the expiration dates and don't buy them in large quantities. Store them away from heat. If they taste bad replace them.

Start with 1 capsule a day and increase the dose over several weeks. Some people get gas or diarrhea if they start taking too much too quickly. Also, if it bothers your stomach or causes burping, try taking it with meals.

Supplement Facts	
Serving Size 2 softgels	
Servings Per Container 30	
Amount Per Serving	% DV
Calories 25	
Calories from Fat 20	
Total Fat 2.5 g	4%**
Saturated Fat 1 g	5%**
Polyunsaturated Fat 1 g	
Monounsaturated Fat 0.5 g	
Cholesterol 25 mg	8%**
Protein Less than 1 g	
Fish Oil Concentrate 2400 mg	*
EPA (Eicosapentaenoic Acid) 360 mg	*
DHA (Docosahexaenoic Acid) 240 mg	*
Other Omega-3 120 mg	*
*Daily Value (DV) not established.	
**Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.	

**Serving size** - how many capsules do you have to take to get the stated amount of omega 3 fatty acids. In this example you need to take 2 capsules.

When doctors recommend taking fish oil they most often give you a dose that is the active ingredients of the fish oil (EPA & DHA). To determine how many capsules you need to take per day to get that, read the fine print and add EPA and DHA together.

**For every 2 capsules** of this brand of Fish Oil you get 360mg EPA and 240mg DHA for a total of 600mg of active ingredients. Each capsule would have 300mg of active fish oil. 6 capsules per day would give you 1800mg (1.8 grams) of fish oil. 7 capsules would give you 2100mg (2.1grams) of fish oil.