

Title: Omega-3 Fish Oil and Heart Health

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Abstract: A patient's guide to omega-3 fish oil and its potential role in prevention of cardiovascular disease. Omega-3's have been shown to be beneficial for some cardiovascular disease but further research is needed to determine optimal dosing.

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## What is Omega-3 Fish Oil?

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Fish oil comes from oily fish, but is not actually produced by the fish. The oil itself is made by microorganisms which are eaten by fish. As a result, the oil is found in fish. Humans can obtain fish oil from eating either fish or fish oil supplements. Fish oil contains certain types of fatty acids. One of these types of fatty acids are called omega-3's. Omega-3 fatty acids are known to be helpful in treating and preventing heart diseases.

## Omega-3 Fish Oil

*Fish oil is a whale of a story, that not surprisingly gets bigger with every telling. -Rogans*



## Omega-3 Fish Oil

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### Basic Information on Omega-3 Fish Oil and Heart Health



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#### References

Lavie CJ, Milani RV, Mehra MR, Ventura HO. Omega-3 Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids and Cardiovascular Diseases. *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* 2009;54:585-594.

## Omega-3's and Cardiovascular Health



### Who Should Take Omega-3's?

According to the latest recommendations from the American Heart Association and several other organizations, all adults can be taking omega-3's. People with known heart disease and those without disease can benefit from omega-3's. Pregnant women, children, and those with allergies to fish should avoid omega-3's.

Omega-3's have been shown to reduce certain cardiovascular diseases and decrease death rate in heart disease patients. The evidence is not as strong for patients without underlying heart disease, but some benefits have been shown in all patients.

### What do Omega-3's do?

The exact method by which omega-3's act in the body is not fully understood. However, scientists have discovered that omega-3's do help prevent certain risk factors.

The FDA has approved omega-3's for the treatment of high blood lipids. It has been shown that omega-3's help lower blood lipids which help to decrease risk of heart disease. Also, omega-3's have been helpful in patients with congestive heart failure along with irregular heartbeats.



Choosing whether to take omega-3's depends on how you want to balance the cost of supplements versus the potential benefits and safety.

In order to experience benefits from omega-3's, ongoing intake is needed for at least a couple of months. It is important to remember that not everyone who takes omega-3's will benefit.

### How much should I take?

A current expert recommendation for amount of omega-3 intake depends on heart disease. For people with underlying heart disease, 1,000mg/day is recommended. In people without known heart disease, 500mg/day is advised. Higher amounts are recommended in people with high blood lipids. Talk to your doctor for further information

### Safety and Cost

The most common side effects from fish oil supplements are nausea, gastrointestinal upset, and burping. Very high doses may cause bleeding problems.

Fish oil pills can be expensive and range in price from \$10-200. Also, there have been concerns of potential mercury contamination from fish oil pills, but the risk of mercury poisoning is quite low.