

Title: Controversial benefits of Omega-3 fatty acid (fish oil)

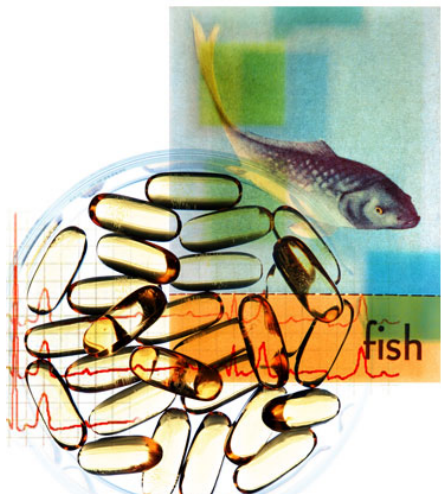
Author: Lance Whitehair, MS4

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Abstract: Fish oil or omega-3 fatty acids are popular supplements. There is debate as to whether fish oil gives cardiovascular benefit particularly with mortality outcomes. A recent systematic review is referenced.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.



For more information on fish oil or omega-3 go to:

<http://medlineplus.gov/>

For more information on a diet and nutrition, exercise and fitness visit the American Heart Association at:

<http://www.americanheart.org>



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Lance Whitehair, MS4

Univ. Minnesota
Moodle.umn.edu

FMCH 7600

No benefit from all cause mortality

FISH OIL CONTAINS:

Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)
Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA)
These are Omega-3 fatty acids.

SYNONYMS

of fish oil:

n-3 fatty acids, n-3
polyunsaturated fatty acids,
omega fatty acids,
polyunsaturated fatty acids
(PUFA), w-3 fatty acids.

BLOOD PRESSURE, ARRHYTHMIAS, BLEEDING, MERCURY

Some studies show fish oil lowers blood pressure slightly. Recent studies have shown that fish oil does not decrease risk of dangerous abnormal heart rhythms.

Higher doses of fish oil can cause increased risk of bleeding.

Some species of fish carry higher risk of contamination such as methylmercury.

TRIGLYCERIDES

Some studies have shown that fish oil lowers triglycerides, and increases HDL (high-density lipoprotein) "good cholesterol."

However, fish oil also increases (worsens) LDL (low-density lipoprotein) levels "bad cholesterol."

This is a mixed influence on buildup of atherosclerotic plaques.

SECONDARY HEADING

Recent studies have shown that fish oil does not reduce risk of death, heart attacks, and strokes.

OUTCOMES SHOW NO BENEFIT.

In a recent (December 2008) systematic review of omega-3 literature,

fish oil supplementation had no effect on all cause mortality.

This means that patients taking fish oil supplements had the same risk of death due to any cause as patients receiving placebo.

