



## Natural Life Consulting, LLC

7 Hodges Street, North Andover, MA 01845

339-368-7551 fax: 978-409-1269

<http://NaturalLifeConsulting.com>

### Omega-3s, Omega-6s, and Dietary Supplements

Polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) are fatty acids that are essential for health and must come from the food we eat (the body cannot create).<sup>1</sup> Specifically, these parent compounds are Alpha Linolenic Acid (ALA – otherwise referred to as omega-3) and Linoleic Acid (LA - otherwise referred to as omega-6). Most people consume plenty of omega-6 fatty acids through their diet. However, some individuals could be deficient in omega-3 fatty acids.

The recommended daily dietary intake ratio for omega-6 to omega-3 ranges from 1:1 to 4:1, but the Western diet is typically 15:1 to 16.7:1. This is typically because the daily intake of omega-3 fats may be insufficient, and the intake of omega-6 fats is high. To balance out the ratio, the recommendations are to increase consumption of foods high in omega-3 (especially Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) from marine food sources) rather than decrease omega-6 foods.<sup>2</sup>

Once consumed, omega-3s can be converted to DHA and EPA as needed. Some dietary sources of omega-3 are chickpeas and dark leafy green vegetables. DHA and EPA are mainly found in fatty fish (e.g., salmon, mackerel, herrings, sardines) and blue/green algae.<sup>3</sup> Recommended daily intake amounts of DHA and EPA have not been established.<sup>4</sup>

**Should people take omega-3 supplements?** There is no consistent support for the benefits of taking omega-3 supplements. However, people who have difficulty in breaking down omega-3 foods into DHA and EPA may benefit by taking a supplement (fish or algae oil).

If your health care provider determines you should take omega-3 supplements, be sure to research how the supplement is manufactured. The fish parts are first steamed, pressed, and then put through a centrifuge to separate the oil from the water, or a less commonly used method is solvent extraction. The resulting oil is then refined by a number of steps utilizing chemicals - neutralization, followed by bleaching, degumming or winterization, and deodorization.<sup>5</sup> These many chemicals can be found in the final fish oil product. Therefore, make sure that the manufacturer's final process is molecular distillation – a process that removes heavy metals (specifically mercury), pesticides, and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs – toxic compounds that are known to be carcinogenic and contribute to other health problems).<sup>6</sup>

The bottom line? Omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids are important nutrients that must be consumed in limited amounts from food.

---

1

[https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4190204/#:~:text=The%20term%20essential%20fatty%20acids,6%20\(%CF%89%2D6\)](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4190204/#:~:text=The%20term%20essential%20fatty%20acids,6%20(%CF%89%2D6))

2 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7037798/#B3-ijms-21-00741>

3 <https://www.umassmed.edu/nutrition/blog/blog-posts/2019/5/omega-3-fatty-acids-a-good-fat-to-have/#:~:text=Food%20Sources%20of%20Omega%203s&text=Aim%20for%202%2D3%20four,kale%2C%20spinach%2C%20other%20dark%20green>

---

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter\\_article/no-need-to-avoid-healthy-omega-6-fats](https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/no-need-to-avoid-healthy-omega-6-fats)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8143521/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://icelandirect.com/what-is-molecularly-distilled-fish-oil/>