

FISH OIL – IT’S ALL GOOD!!!

Eskimos! How come they were so healthy when most of their nutrition was derived from fats and protein from fish? No so called ‘healthy, low fat, low cholesterol, sugar free, lactose free, wonder food’ options for them. Part of the answer lies in the fact that a diet that is high in fish oil / good fat / omega 3 is extremely natural and has a vast range of health benefits, just a few of which are shown below.

Some fish store their precious cargo of oil in their flesh; examples are oily fish like Salmon, Mackerel and Sardines and some store it in their liver like Cod. These oils / fats are part of the Polyunsaturated group of Essential fatty acids (EFAs) of which Omega 3 is derived. Omega 3s are further subdivided into Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA). These fatty acids have a host of health benefits and we humans are especially predisposed to eat copious amount of the stuff! Remember that we are essentially still cavemen who consumed large amounts of EPA and DHA fats derived from fish, wild meat, brain matter and bone marrow.

Modern eating habits do not give us nearly the same amount of Omega 3 as we are designed to eat. This lack of omega 3 is causing, as they say ‘issues’! If you take the time to research the benefits of Fish oil you will get a rough idea of the importance of adequate consumption of this essential fat:

Some examples of it’s benefits include:

- Less fat in the blood - Reduces blood triglyceride levels and lowers LDLs, so called bad cholesterol.
- Helps transport hormones through the body not least of all testosterone.
- Vitamins A, D, E and K are fat soluble and require fats to transport them.
- Increases the feel good hormones Serotonin and Dopamine which help combat depression.
- Reduces blood pressure, arterial plaque and thins the blood (stops red blood cells from clumping together) which in turn helps circulation.
- Aids with fat loss by improving the cells sensitivity to insulin. Insulin is often too high due to poor food choices. Omega 3 basically turns off the fat storage gene and turns on the fat burning gene by increasing enzyme activity to oxidise fat. It also allows the cells to be more permeable allowing nutrients in and waste out much more efficiently. There is an old saying ‘ Eat fat to lose fat’
- Fats will slow the rise of blood sugar levels, therefore reducing the surge of insulin from the pancreas after eating high GI foods. These 2 points will directly help Diabetes sufferers.
- Improves gut health e.g. it is used to treat IBS among other GI illnesses.
- It is an excellent beauty produce, keeps the skin and hair supple!
- The nervous system and motor skills are improved with adequate fat intake. The nervous system, like the brain requires omega 3 to develop and function fully, this is especially so during fetal and baby development. When we are babies our brain is 60% DHA omega 3. Mum was right fish really is brain food!
- Improves Cardio vascular health.
- Further increases blood flow by stimulating nitric oxide which causes vasodilatation (expansion of blood vessels); this in turn allows more nutrients to the muscles and cells ... the list of benefits is endless!

There is a lot of debate about how much fish we should eat, is it contaminated and can we get the same benefits from other sources. These are all fair questions; my own view for what it’s worth is as follows:

The benefits of eating fish far outweigh the possibility of contamination especially if the fish are wild. However the whole point of writing this is to encourage people to take on board adequate amounts of Omega 3. Supplementing with either fish oil (liquid or capsules) facilitates this. Good quality fish oil will be filtered correctly and therefore be free from contaminations like PCB, mercury and Dioxins. A lean and healthy person requires 6 – 9 grams per day, however much higher doses can be used to help with some of the problems listed above.

Note: 1 capsule is generally 1 gram, 1 teaspoon is 5 grams and a tablespoon is 15 grams.

Flaxseed is also part of the Omega 3 family called alpha linolenic acid (ALA). It is not as efficient a source of EPA or DHA. The body must convert it from ALA, therefore much higher doses are required for the same effect that you get from fish oil omega 3. Flaxseed oil will also go rancid very quickly when exposed to the air. For these reasons fish oil is the better choice of omega 3. Flaxseeds however are a good source of fiber and phytoestrogen.

To briefly summarise, some fats are good, omega 3s fatty acids are very good and omega 3s from fish or fish oil are extremely good! The omega 3 DHA is especially helpful with brain and nervous system function. The omega 3 EPA is especially helpful to combat inflammatory (the silent killer) health issues. If you do decide to supplement with fish oil you ought to ensure you use a good quality oil that has been sourced and filtered to remove all heavy metals and toxins, see our products page on the website.