

# Discover 5 Amazing Benefits of EPA/DHA (Omega-3 Fatty Acids/Fish Oil)

By: [Lucho Crisalle, RD](#)

Amazing indeed! This powerhouse of a supplement really packs an overall health and nutritional power punch. Scientists were first alerted to the many benefits of eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) in the early 1970's when Danish physicians observed that Greenland Eskimos had an exceptionally low incidence of heart disease and arthritis, despite the fact that they consumed a high-fat diet. Intensive research soon discovered that two of the fats (oils) they consumed in large quantities, EPA and DHA came from their high fish diet, and were the primary cause for their low incidence of heart disease and arthritis.

More recent research has established the following 5 Amazing Benefits of EPA/DHA (Omega-3 Fatty Acid Fish Oils):

**1. Fish oils are one of the few substances known to lower concentrations of triglycerides (fatty substances) in the blood.**

Considered the "heart's best friend," an enormous amount of medical literature supports the fact that fish oils prevent atherosclerosis, angina, heart attack, congestive heart failure, arrhythmias, stroke, and peripheral vascular disease, and may reverse many of these conditions. Fish oils actually help maintain the elasticity of artery walls, prevent blood clotting, reduce blood pressure and stabilize heart rhythm.

**2. Increasing the amount of Omega-3 fatty acids has direct effects on serotonin levels. Good for the brain!**

Low DHA levels have been linked to low brain serotonin levels which again are connected to an increased tendency for depression, suicide, and violence. A high intake of fish oil has been linked to a significant decrease in age-related memory loss and cognitive function impairment and a lower risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Additionally, researchers at Harvard Medical School have successfully used fish oil supplementation to treat bipolar disorder (manic-depressive illness) and British researchers report encouraging results in the treatment of schizophrenia.

**3. Fish oils are particularly effective in reducing inflammation and maintaining healthy joint function.**

Fish oils act in part by maintaining healthy prostaglandin, cytokine and leukotriene production, supporting connective tissue and cartilage integrity. The results of numerous small double blind trials indicate that the omega-3 fatty acids in fish oil, promote joint motility and joint comfort. Daily supplementation can markedly reduce the number of tender joints and increase the time before fatigue sets in.

**4. Considerable new evidence shows that fish oil consumption can delay or reduce tumor development in breast cancer, and reduce the risk of developing prostate cancer.**

Studies have shown that a high blood level of omega-3 fatty acids combined with a low level of omega-6 acids reduces the risk of developing breast cancer. Daily

supplementation with as little as 2.5 grams of fish oils has been found effective in preventing the progression from benign polyps to colon cancer and Korean researchers recently reported that prostate cancer patients have low blood levels of omega-3 fatty acids.

In a recent clinical study, 60 patients with advanced metastatic cancer were split into two groups. One group received a placebo, another a high dose fish oil. The results were spectacular. With the placebo 38% survived for 6 mos., 10% one year, and none for a year and a half. With the fish oil, 93% survived for 6 months, 70% for one year and about 20% for 18 months.

#### **5. Omega-3 for weight control – Yes, weight control!**

Ironically, the key to stopping new fat storage and losing existing fat is to eat the right kind of fat: namely, the long-chain “marine” omega-3 essential fatty acids (EFA’s) found at high levels only in algae, fish, and fish oil. Marine-source omega-3 fatty acids help us burn off those calories before they get a chance to “sit around in storage,” which means we end up carrying less excess weight.

What is really amazing about the long-chain omega 3’s found in cold water fish and fish oil supplements is that they *turn off the gene that controls fat storage!* For the first time, science has proven beyond a doubt that nutritional components of our diet can directly control and influence key metabolic genes in our cells. This means the EFA’s we consume can significantly affect the way we store and burn fat.

In a pilot study presented at the North American Association for Study of Obesity (NAASO) Annual Meeting, November 2004, including 20 women with severe obesity (Body Mass Index, BMI, more than 40), the women were already on a very low calorie diet. The group given the omega-3 concentrate reduced their weight by 20% more than the group given placebo after only three weeks of treatment. BMI was reduced by as much as 15%. The effects were highly impressive because of the short treatment period.

So what exactly is EPA/DHA (Omega-3 Fatty Acid Fish Oil)? Omega-3 acids are found in flaxseed oil, walnut oil, and marine plankton and fatty fish. The main component of flaxseed and walnut oils is alpha-linolenic acid, while the predominant fatty acids found in fatty fish and fish oils are eicosapentaenoic acid and docosahexaenoic acid. The most beneficial and active of these fatty acids are EPA and DHA. Alpha-linolenic acid can be converted to EPA and DHA in the body, but the conversion is quite inefficient – especially in the elderly.

The health benefits of marine omega-3 fatty acids are increasingly being accepted worldwide. The scientific evidence continues to mount, representing an opportunity for the treatment and prevention of common diseases. The American Heart Association and the World Health Organization both support the addition of omega-3 fatty acids to diets citing their importance in maintaining good health.

The recommended dosage on most fish oil supplement bottles is usually the minimum required, and does not yield many of the benefits listed above (especially the fat burning benefit). I have seen best results with my clients and patients when they use

three grams (1gram = 1000 mg) with breakfast, lunch, and dinner totaling nine grams per day (9000mg).

A colleague of mine who works mostly with professional athletes in Arizona has been known to recommend much higher dosages that taper down to nine grams per day for a fat loss regimen. His recommendation is to start with 25 grams per day in five divided doses for a period of five days. On the sixth day the dosage drops to 20 grams per day or five doses of four grams per day for five days. After that phase has been completed, the dosage drops to 15 grams in five doses of three grams per day for an additional five days and going to nine grams per day in three doses of three grams each and staying with 9 grams per day from then on.

When taking these high amounts of fish oil (we recommend [American Cellular Labs EFA-952 Xtreme](#)), it is also recommended to supplement with vitamin E. We recommend [Pure Encapsulations Ultra Synergist E](#) which consists of a blend of mixed tocopherols. While on the 25 grams per day through the 20 grams per day phase, three vitamin E softgels (one softgel with breakfast, lunch, and dinner) are recommended, lowering the dosage to two during the 15 gram phase, and eventually down to one for the nine gram or final phase. Because of the antioxidant benefits of vitamin E, when down to one vitamin E per day, I recommend taking it after workouts.

Once the nine gram per day phase has been reached, which is the maintenance amount, as well as the required amount for many of the benefits listed in this article, only one Ultra Synergist E capsule is needed. Some people do not enjoy using fish oil as it sometimes may cause a fish tasting “burp.” This is easily fixed by taking a digestive enzyme called [Betaine HCl Pepsin](#) starting with one capsule each time the fish oil is taken and increasing it by one capsule until the amount taken stops the “fish burp” from happening. As the fish oil dose is lowered, so is the Betaine HCl Pepsin. There is a slight chance that using these high dosages of fish oil may cause some gastro intestinal discomfort such as diarrhea for a very small number of individuals. If this is the case, just drop the dosage to the next lower level and continue with it for a shorter period (two or three days instead of five) until the maintenance dose of nine per day is reached.

The one concern with using fish oil is its possible mercury content. That is why I only use and recommend [American Cellular Labs EFA-952 Xtreme](#), as they are thoroughly tested and guaranteed to be **mercury free!**

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