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Essential Fatty Acids?

Omega 3 and 6 are essential, and omega 9 is non-essential. The body has the ability to produce non-essential fatty acids. Essential fatty acids, though no less necessary, are not made naturally in the body and must be derived from the diet. They serve a number of functions, including ensuring proper brain and cardiovascular functions while also promoting healthy skin and weight.

Omega 3: Omega 3 is found in fish like salmon, tuna, and halibut, as well as other marine life and certain plants and oils.

There are three forms of omega 3:

1. *Alpha-linolenic acid (ALA)*
2. *Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA)*
3. *Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)*

When ALA is ingested, the body converts it into either EPA or DHA, which the body can metabolize. Omega 3 fatty acids have been linked to a host of benefits in the body, including:

- *Reduction of inflammation*
- *Prevention of chronic diseases like cancer, heart disease, and arthritis*
- *Improved cognitive function including memory and performance*

Omega 6: Omega 6 fatty acids are found in meats, nuts, and oils and come in several forms:

1. *Linoleic acid (LA)*, found in plant oils.
2. *Gamma-linoleic acid (GLA)*, found in plant oils like evening primrose oil, borage oil, and black currant seed oil.
3. *Arachidonic acid (AA)*, found in meat. AA can actually cause inflammation, but this is generally tempered by anti-inflammatory effects of GLA.

HEALTH WATCH-2020-6

To get the most beneficial results, omega 3 and omega 6 fatty acids must be used together. Omega 6 fatty acid tends to have pro-inflammatory effects in the body while omega 3 is anti-inflammatory.

To balance one another, a safe ratio is two to four times more omega 6 than omega 3. Many North American diets include about a 16:1 ratio of omega 6 to omega 3, an imbalance that could potentially contribute to inflammatory diseases and other chronic conditions.

Omega 9: Omega 9 is a non-essential fatty acid since it is produced in the body. Most often found in nut oils like canola or olive oil.

- a. *Lowers bad cholesterol and raises good cholesterol, reducing cardiovascular disease.*
- b. *May be useful for regulating blood sugar levels.*

Serious Side Effects with Docosahexaenoic Acid

There are a few side effects with Docosahexaenoic acid that you should report to your healthcare provider and which may indicate that you should stop taking Docosahexaenoic acid. These include, but are not limited to signs of internal bleeding, such as:

- a. *Black, tarry stools; bright-red blood in the stool; or vomiting of blood (signs of gastrointestinal bleeding)*
- b. *Signs of a hemorrhagic stroke (bleeding in the brain), such as vision or speech changes, weakness or numbness in an arm or leg, or a severe headache.*
- c. *Signs of an allergic reaction, including an unexplained rash, hives, itching, swelling, wheezing, or difficulty breathing or swallowing.*

Docosahexaenoic acid may also slightly increase LDL cholesterol ("bad cholesterol"). You may also experience a fishy aftertaste. Taking it with food may help reduce this side effect.