

Fish Oil

What is it?

Fish oil is a healthy source of fat (omega-3 fatty acids). In high doses, fish oil can lower levels of triglycerides and raise HDL (good) cholesterol levels. High levels of triglycerides can increase your risk of heart disease. Triglycerides are a type of fat made by the body from extra energy and sugar.

Why do I need fish oil supplements?

Your doctor may have told you to take fish oil because you have:

- High triglycerides
- Low HDL (good) cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Irregular heartbeat
- Depression

When Fish oil is taken daily it can:

- Lower triglyceride levels
- Increase good (HDL) cholesterol levels
- Decrease the stickiness of blood cells (platelets)

Is fish oil safe?

Fish oil supplements are generally recognized as safe (GRAS) for use in children and adults. Some types of fish may be contaminated with mercury and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyl). When fish oil supplements are made, these are removed. Shark, king mackerel, and farm-raised salmon supplements may be contaminated. Cod liver oil is not recommended as it is lower in omega-3 fatty acids and large doses

may provide too much vitamin A. Flaxseed oil and other sources of ALA (alpha-linolenic acid) may **not** be used because they do not lower triglycerides or raise HDL.

Stop fish oil for one week before surgeries. Discuss this with your surgeon.

Possible Interactions with Other Medicines

- Birth control pills
- Blood pressure medicines
- Orlistat
- Blood thinners

Special Precautions with These Conditions

- Liver disease
- Fish or seafood allergy
- Bipolar disorder
- Depression
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Conditions with low immune systems
- Implanted defibrillator
- Bleeding disorders
- Familial adenomatous polyposis

How do I take fish oil?

1. Find the right dose to take from your healthcare provider. Common daily doses are 2,000mg to 4,000mg of two omega-3 fatty acids, EPA and DHA.

2. Find a fish oil supplement that is right for you. There are softgels and liquid versions. Your healthcare provider can provide suggestions and direction on where to buy these supplements.
3. Find the “Serving Size” on the Supplement Facts panel.
4. Add the EPA + DHA to find the dose per serving. In the example, 1 softgel equals 935mg (683mg EPA + 252mg DHA).
5. Take fish oil with or without meals. Choose a time that is easy for you to remember every day.

To decrease “fish burps” try to:

- Store the fish oil in the refrigerator.
- Buy a Burpless brand.
- Swallow it cold.
- Take it at night.

Supplement Facts	
Serving Size 1 Softgel	
Amount Per Softgel	% Daily Value
Calories 15	
Total Fat 1.5 g	2%**
Polyunsaturated Fat 1 g	
Cholesterol 15 mg	5%**
Total Carbohydrate less than 1 g	< 1%**
Omega-3 Concentrate from Fish Oil ^{††} 1400 mg	*
Total Omega-3 Fatty Acids ^{††} 1000 mg	*
EPA (Eicosapentaenoic Acid) Omega-3 ^{††} 683 mg	*
DHA (Docosahexaenoic Acid) Omega-3 ^{††} 252 mg	*
Other Omega-3 ^{††} 65 mg	*
*Daily Value not established.	
**Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.	

Teach Back

What is the most important thing you learned from this handout? What changes will you make in your diet/lifestyle, based on what you learned today?

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions, please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500**.

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF) can be reached at:
(608) 287-2770.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 3/2019 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Clinical Nutrition Services Department and the Department of Nursing. HF#592