



## Eat More Omega 3 Fatty Acids

For several years now, Omega 3 fatty acids have been touted for their health promoting properties. Of all the things you can choose to include more of in your diet, these fatty acids would be the ones to pick!

So what exactly are Omega 3's? Well, once you wade through all the chemical scientific jargon, omega 3s are polyunsaturated fats. They are considered to be *essential* fatty acids, which means that your body isn't particularly good at making them on its own. In other words, you must get them from food. A little note- anytime you see the word "essential" in the nutrition world (ex. Essential vitamin, essential mineral, etc), it means that 1. Your body needs it, and 2. Your body cannot produce it, and 3. You must get it from food or supplements.

Anyway, back to the point. There are actually three forms of omega 3 fatty acids. You may see these written as DHA, ALA and EPA. We won't go into the specifics of what those acronyms stand for (yawn...) but it is important to note that the two forms with the most health benefits are DHA and EPA. These can be found together in certain fish. Flaxseed and walnuts contain only the ALA form, which is eventually converted to DHA and EPA in the body.

Research has shown several significant ways in which omega 3s benefit our health. Are you looking for ways to lower your LDL cholesterol? Protect your cardiovascular system? Reduce inflammation? If so, omega 3's may give you a bit of help in that direction. Omega 3s have been shown to:

- Help lower LDL cholesterol, while increasing HDL cholesterol.
- Slightly lower both systolic and diastolic blood pressure.
- Improve endothelial function ( the inner linings of our veins and arteries)
- Inhibit new arterial plaque formations.
- Decrease risk of arrhythmias (abnormal heartbeat).
- Have anti-inflammatory effect in the body (helpful to people with arthritis).

How much do you need and where can you find it?

Although the term "fatty fish" doesn't sound very healthy, these are exactly the kinds of fish that contain the most omega 3 fatty acids. The American Heart Association suggests that you consume at least two servings of fatty fish per week (one serving = 3.5 ounces cooked fish). Examples of fatty fish include: tuna, salmon, trout, sardines and mackerel. If you are not a fan of eating fish, there are a wide variety of supplements available that contain both DHA and EPA.



To further illustrate the importance of this particular nutrient in our diet, consider the health effects of NOT getting enough omega 3 fatty acids. People with omega 3 deficiencies show symptoms such as fatigue, poor circulation, poor memory, dry skin, heart problems, mood swings and depression. I don't know about you, but I would like to avoid all of those conditions.

For an easy, tasty recipe that includes omega 3-rich salmon, check out the latest Interior Attack segment: Salmon with summer salsa and Quinoa. You can find it here:

[http://www.ncdoi.com/OSFM/RPD/PT/HW\\_Healthy\\_Cooking.aspx](http://www.ncdoi.com/OSFM/RPD/PT/HW_Healthy_Cooking.aspx)

Thanks for reading!

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### Works Cited

Mary B. Grosvenor, L. S. (2010). *Visualizing Nutrition: Everyday Choices*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.