

Inflammatory Bowel Disease & Omega-3 Fatty Acids

What are omega-3 fatty acids?

Omega-3 fatty acids are healthy fats and are known to have many health benefits. For example, omega-3 fatty acids may have anti-inflammatory effects on the body. Therefore, they may play an important role in the treatment of disorders that involve inflammation, like Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). The two most beneficial omega-3 fatty acids are docosahexanoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA). Alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) is also an omega-3 fatty acid; however its conversion to DHA and EPA is not efficient in our bodies. **Most Canadians tend to consume adequate amount of ALA in their diet, however the intakes of DHA and EPA tend to be low.**

Can omega-3 fatty acids help in IBD?

Research trials show promising results that omega-3 fatty acids may help to decrease inflammation in the intestine which in turn may help to decrease the severity and frequency of IBD symptoms. Omega-3 fatty acids may also help to relieve IBD-related joint pain.

Incorporating omega-3 fatty acids into your diet is a safe and effective way to improve your overall health. The optimal amount of omega-3 fatty acids a person with IBD should consume in the diet has yet to be determined. The general public is advised to consume a minimum of 400-500 milligrams/day of DHA and EPA combined.

Asking for help:

The connection between IBD and omega-3 fatty acids is complex. Ask your dietitian if you have any questions or would like more information.



What foods contain omega-3 fatty acids?

Our body does not make omega-3 fatty acids; therefore we must obtain them from our diet. The typical North America diet is low in omega-3 fatty acids.

The best sources of omega-3 fatty acids are:

Food	Total Amount of Omega-3 Fatty Acids per Serving [6,11]	DHA + EPA per serving [6,11]	ALA per serving [6,11]
Salmon (75 g, 2 ½ oz)	1700 mg	1610 mg	90 mg
Anchovies (75 g, 2 ½ oz)	1550 mg	1540 mg	10 mg
Sardines (75 g, 2 ½ oz)	1100 mg	730 mg	370 mg
Mackerel (75 g, 2 ½ oz)	990 mg	900 mg	90 mg
Trout (75 g, 2 ½ oz)	850 mg	700 mg	150 mg
Tuna (packed in oil) (75 g, 2 ½ oz)	330 mg	180 mg	150 mg
Ground Flaxseed (75g, 2 ½ oz)	1600 mg	0 mg	1600 mg
Walnuts (60 mL, ¼ cup)	630 mg	0 mg	630 mg
Flaxseed Oil (15 mL, 1 tbsp)	7740 mg	0 mg	7740 mg
Canola Oil (15 mL, 1 tbsp)	1320 mg	0 mg	1320 mg
Soybean Oil (15 mL, 1 tbsp)	940 mg	0 mg	940 mg
Olive Oil (15 mL, 1 tbsp)	110 mg	0 mg	110 mg
Enriched Eggs (1 egg)	150 mg	50 mg	100 mg
Enriched Milk (250 mL, 1 cup)	20 mg	20 mg	0 mg
Enriched Yogurt (175 g, ¾ cup)	40 mg	40 mg	0 mg

Food Fact:

There are a growing number of products on the market that are enriched with omega-3 fatty acids (e.g. omega 3 eggs, yogurt, milk, ect.). The amount of omega-3 fatty acids may vary in these products. Be sure to read the label.



What about an omega-3 fatty acid supplement?

If your diet is low in omega-3 fatty acids, a supplement may be considered. There are a number of supplements on the market that contain omega-3 fatty acids.

For example, if you are aiming to consume 500 mg/day of EPA + DHA combined, you should look for a label like this:

Each Capsule Contains:	
Fish Oils	
(Salmon, anchovy, sardine).....	1000 mg
Eicosapentaenoic Acid (EPA).....	300 mg
Docosahexanoic Acid (DHA).....	200 mg

} **300 mg EPA + 200 mg DHA = 500 mg**

Making omega-3 fatty acids work for you:

- Eat two or more servings of fatty fish (75g per serving or 2 ½ oz) each week.
- Use flaxseed, canola, soybean, or olive oil when cooking or baking.
- Consider taking a daily omega-3 fatty acid supplement.



References

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