

SIZING UP OMEGA-3

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USA TODAY

What should you eat to get enough omega-3 fatty acids in your diet for a healthy heart?

Try eating salmon, sardines, herring, mackerel, trout or swordfish two or three times a week. If you can't stomach those, eat a tuna sandwich a couple of times a week.

Once a day, you might cook with one of those oils. Or make your salads with those oils or flaxseed oil. Or for variety, try using ground-up flaxseed or walnuts as a topping for your cereals, say some of the top nutrition researchers on these fats.

Scientists have been singing the praises of omega-3 fatty acids for years now. Research has shown that they reduce sudden death from heart attack probably by preventing fatal rhythm disturbances. Two studies, out in April, revealed that people with no heart trouble can safeguard their hearts and reduce their risk of sudden death by eating oily fish twice a week. Plus, other studies link omega-3 fatty acids to potential benefits for the treatment of everything from depression to arthritis to colon inflammation.

But many questions remain unanswered, and, meanwhile, Americans are floundering about what they should be eating.

There still is no final word on how much omega-3 fatty acids a person should consume, but it is clear that many Americans are not getting enough, says Walter Willett, chairman of the department of nutrition at Harvard School of Public Health.

For someone who is basically healthy, just having fish several times a week will give most, if not all, of the benefits, he says. "It doesn't seem we need to be eating large amounts of fish every day," says Willett, author of *Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy*.

Studies in England, France, Italy and India show the benefits of these essential fats, says Artemis Simopoulos, one of the pioneer researchers in this area and author of *The Omega Diet: The Lifesaving Nutritional Program Based on the Diet of the Island of Crete* with Jo Robinson.

NOT JUST IN FISH

Fish may be the richest source of long-chain omega-3 fatty acids, but plant foods such as flaxseed, contain shorter-chain omega-3 fatty acids called alpha-linolenic acid. Vegetarians and people who really don't like fish should try to add ground flaxseed to their diets.

Simopoulos and Willett offer these other suggestions for enriching the diet in omega-3 fatty acids:

♥ Get at least one good source of alpha-linolenic acid. Ground Flaxseed provides the highest short-chain omega-3 fatty acids. You can add flaxseed to salads, multi-grain cereal or juices.

♥ Try and incorporate fatty fish into your diet two or three times a week. Besides the omega-3 fatty acid benefits, there are probably some additional advantages in having fish because it's often replacing red meat, which has other downsides, such as large amounts of saturated fat.

♥ Eat your tuna. Use tuna packed in spring water or olive oil. Or use canned salmon, mackerel and herring, and make a salad in a similar way.

♥ Cook with olive oil.

Fish, other foods rich in fatty acids

- ♥ Eat walnuts. They are a perfect food.
- ♥ Try foods such as whole grain breads, eggs that have been enriched with omega-3 fatty acids.

Experts are divided on the amount of omega-3 fatty acids needed to get health benefits, but many recommend eating fish twice a week. Others also suggest eating plant foods rich in these fats. Here's a look at some foods high in omega-3 fatty acids:

- Fish
- Salmon
- Trout
- Tuna
- Lake Whitefish
- Bluefish
- Swordfish
- Herring
- Anchovies
- Mackerel
- Sardines

Source: The Omega Diet; Prevention Magazine's Complete Nutrition Reference Handbook

Other Resources:

- Ground Flaxseed
- Walnuts
- Canola Oil
- Soybean Oil
- Mayonnaise
- Italian dressing made with soybean oil

Source: Eat, Drink, and be Healthy

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