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Life Extension Update Exclusive

Omega-3 fatty acids from fish or fish oil supplements reduce mortality from all causes

A report published in March 2004 by the United States Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality on the subject of the effects of omega-3 fatty acids on cardiovascular disease has concluded that consumption of the fatty acids from fish or fish oil supplements reduces all cause mortality as well as cardiovascular disease outcomes. Omega-3 fatty acids include eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) which occur in fish and fish oil, and alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), which is found in plant oils. Omega-3 fatty acids have been associated with health benefits in a number of studies.

For the 116-page Evidence Report, Tufts-New England Medical Center investigators analyzed The Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals (CSFII) and the third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES III) to determine the omega-3 intake of the US population. In addition, 7,464 abstracts were screened and 39 studies were selected for review of the effects of omega-3 fatty acids on the general population and in populations with pre-existing cardiovascular disease or cardiovascular risk factors.

The researchers found that only one quarter of the US population consumed any amount of EPA or DHA. Consumption of these two fatty acids was associated with a reduction in all cause mortality as well as cardiovascular events. Research concerning alpha-linolenic acid consumption in the form of supplements was not found to be conclusive.

A review of 142 articles that provided data on the subject found that gastrointestinal side effects were the adverse events most commonly observed among omega-3 supplement users. The frequently expressed concern regarding increased bleeding was not found to be of significance in this review, as bleeding events did not occur any more frequently in those who received omega-3 supplements than in those who did not. No life-threatening or other significant side effects were associated with omega-3 fatty acid consumption. In addition, 77 studies reported that the absence of adverse effects.

Although this report analyzed a significant amount of research, further trials were recommended by the reviewers in order to investigate a number of issues, such as the effect of omega-3 fatty acids on specific populations.

Protocol

Cardiovascular disease overview

Americans have become complacent about the dangers of arterial disease. One reason is that the percentage of young people dying from acute heart attack has plummeted over the past 50 years. Explanations for these reductions include lifestyle changes, greater use of dietary supplements/ preventive medications, and improved cardiac medical care.

The question is why are so many Americans continuing to die from heart attack and stroke? The fundamental answer is that

people are living longer. What has happened is that much of the human population has succeeded in delaying the development of arterial disease. So instead of suddenly dying from a heart attack at age 50, the vascular symptoms do not manifest until the 60s or 80s are reached. At this point, systemic arteriosclerosis has damaged the major organ systems, and multiple degenerative diseases result in diminished quality and quantity of life.

Many of the underlying causes of arterial disease have been identified in the scientific literature. Regrettably, cardiologists have only addressed a limited number of these factors, such as prescribing cholesterol-lowering drugs, controlling hypertension, etc. By ignoring the other proven causes for the epidemic of vascular-related diseases, a significant number of Americans are experiencing needless suffering and are dying prematurely.

This overview presents some of the more important missing pieces of the puzzle about why cardiovascular disease remains the nation's leadingcrippler and killer. It provides solid information about what can be done to significantly reduce cardiovascular risk today.

<http://www.lef.org/protocols/prtcl-163.shtml>

Featured Products

Mega EPA/DHA softgels

The body needs fatty acids to survive and is able to make all but two of them: linoleic acid, in the omega-6 family and linolenic acid, in the omega-3 family. These two fatty acids must be supplied by the diet and are therefore considered essential fatty acids (EFAs).

Omega-3 fatty acids that are found in cold water fish (and fish oil) and perilla and flaxseed oils, have the ability to suppress the production of inflammatory mediators. Omega-3 oils contain the essential fatty acids eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), which can be lacking in the typical Western diet that includes a high amounts of omega-6 fats.



<http://www.lef.org/newshop/items/item00625.html>

Perilla Oil softgels

Gastrointestinal side effects have precluded some people from getting enough omega-3 fatty acids from fish. Both the EPA and DHA in fish oils can be made by the body from alpha-linolenic acid, which is plentiful in only a few plants, such as Perilla frutescens. Perilla oil comes from the seeds of the plant that is also called the beefsteak plant. Perilla frutescens has been consumed in the East Asian diet for thousands of years.



<http://www.lef.org/newshop/items/item00413.html>

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In the News: Study links depression to omega-3 deficiency

A team of researchers at the Erasmus University Medical Centre in Rotterdam, Netherlands, looked at the association between depression and the fatty-acid composition of blood plasma in 264 subjects with depressive symptoms and 461 randomly selected reference subjects who screened negative for depression.* After an overnight fast, all of the participants had their blood drawn, which was then analyzed for omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids and for C-reactive protein (an indicator of immune response).

The Dutch scientists found a correlation between the intake of fatty acids and depressive disorders in the elderly after adjustment for demographic and biological factors. As the amount of omega-3 fatty acids (such as EPA and DHA) increased in the participants' diets relative to omega-6 acids (like linoleic acid and arachidonic acid), the incidence of depression declined.

Moreover, the strength of this association grew as C-reactive protein levels dropped. The researchers believe that this is because people with impaired immune systems are sicker and more likely to be depressed, so diet is not as big a factor in determining their mood. The healthier you are, the more your dietary choices influence your frame of mind. While it has been known for some time that eating cold-water fish and taking fish-oil capsules are good for the heart, it now appears that consuming more omega-3s can make one happier as well.

If you have questions or comments concerning this issue or past issues of Life Extension Update, send them to ddye@lifeextension.com or call 954 766 8433 extension 7716.

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