

Can a Supplement Help You Meet Your Omega-3 Fatty Acid Requirements?

Yes. Look for a mercury-free fish oil supplement containing both DHA and EPA, or algae-derived, DHA-only supplement.

Are Omega-3 fatty acids in my prenatal vitamins?

Possibly. Check the label. Many prenatal vitamins do NOT contain enough (if any) Omega-3 fatty acids.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids and the Premature Infant

Ongoing studies are showing that there are many benefits to Omega-3 fatty acids for the premature infant. Research has demonstrated that there are better outcomes for these newborns in weight gain, eye and brain development, as well as reduced respiratory and allergy problems, when premature infants have increased amounts of Omega-3 fats provided in their diets.

For More Information

Please talk to your healthcare provider about Omega-3 fatty acid supplementation or contact:

Wolfson Children's Hospital Lactation Consultant
904.202.6139

Wolfson Children's Hospital Neonatal Nutritionist
904.202.2126



Omega-3 Fatty Acids in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

Are You Getting Enough?



An educational brochure provided by



with funding from



WolfsonChildrens.org • 904.202.8000

Through good nutrition from the beginning of your pregnancy, you can help your baby have the very best possible health. Part of good nutrition during pregnancy is ensuring your intake of Omega-3 fatty acids is adequate.

What Are Omega-3 Fatty Acids?

Omega-3 fatty acids are a type of fat that is not made by our bodies. They are essential fats important to your baby's health, growth and development, and have an impact on your baby's organ systems. We can only get them

through the foods we eat or through supplements.

The three types of Omega-3 fatty acids are:

- Alpha linolenic acid (ALA)
- Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)
- Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA)



Why are Omega-3 Fatty Acids in Your Diet Important?

Many recent research studies have shown the benefits of including Omega-3 fatty acids, most importantly DHA, in your diet, especially during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Benefits of Omega-3 Fatty Acids to your Baby

- DHA is a major building block in eye and brain tissue and has been shown to help with brain and vision development.
- Increasing the amount of Omega-3 fats in your diet has been associated with a reduced risk of premature birth.

Benefits of Omega-3 Fatty Acids to You

- Reduced risk of heart disease
- Helps you maintain a better mood during and after pregnancy
- Helps lower bad cholesterol and helps raise good cholesterol

How much of the Omega-3 fatty acids do you need?

It is recommended that pregnant women get a minimum of 300 mg of DHA per day and a total of 650 mg of all of the Omega-3 fatty acids per day.

Foods Containing Omega-3 Fatty Acids

DHA and EPA are found in fatty, cold-water fish such as salmon, sardines, chunk-light tuna and herring. ALA is found in flaxseed oil, canola oil, pumpkin seeds and walnuts. Our bodies can convert a small percentage of ALA into DHA and EPA.

Should you supplement?

If it is difficult for you to get enough Omega-3 fatty acids from your diet alone, it is important for your baby's health that you take a supplement. Ask your physician or midwife for information on these supplements, which are available over the counter.

How Can You Get Enough Omega-3 Fatty Acids in Your Diet?

Choose vegetable oils that are rich in ALA, such as flaxseed, canola and soybean oils. Eat two servings of fish* per week that are high in DHA and EPA and low in mercury, such as:

- Salmon
- Mackerel (not King)
- Anchovies
- Sardines
- Chunk-light tuna

To limit your mercury exposure, which can be harmful to pregnant women, the Institute of Medicine recommends that pregnant and breastfeeding women limit seafood intake to no more than 12 oz. per week, and albacore tuna to 6 oz. per week.

*All pregnant and breastfeeding women should avoid tilefish, shark, swordfish and king mackerel.