

Improve heart health

When researchers discovered that Greenland Eskimos had a very high consumption of “good” omega-3 FA’s and a reduced risk for heart disease, the light bulbs in many health-conscious minds immediately illuminated⁽¹⁴⁾. Now, it is generally accepted that consumption of fish oil, rich in omega-3 FA’s, has a beneficial effect on heart disease and mortality. This is thought to be due to the improved blood lipid profile and reduced risk for blood clotting in the vessels of these Eskimos⁽¹⁵⁾.

Over time, researchers found that treatment with 850 mg/d of omega-3 FA’s resulted in an improved blood lipid profile and a reduced risk of sudden death by 45% and cardiovascular mortality by 30%, following just four months of treatment⁽¹⁶⁾.

It seems that omega-3 FA’s are beneficial for aging adults in preventing and alleviating symptoms of cardiovascular disease. Therefore, the *American Heart Association* recommends fatty fish at least twice a week for those without documented coronary heart disease, 1g/d of EPA and DHA (*specific types of omega-3 fatty acids*) for those with documented disease, and 2-4g/d for patients with high triglyceride levels^(4,17).

Control inflammation

A high omega-6: omega-3 ratio may lead to numerous inflammatory diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, psoriasis and some might even say aging⁽⁵⁾. Yet again, it is clear that omega-6 intake must be balanced with omega-3 intake to diminish the pro-inflammatory properties of omega-6 fats and help stop some complications that go along with aging.

Researchers found that by increasing omega-3 fatty acid consumption (*from a diet high in flaxseed oil*) decreased inflammatory markers by 30% in just 4 weeks⁽¹⁸⁾.

Think more clearly

If you find yourself forgetting where your keys are or where you left your cell phone, don’t be too worried. Unfortunately, aging is associated with cognitive impairment and this mental deterioration has been linked to various deficiencies of the diet^(12,20). The uses of omega-3 FA’s to improve cognitive ability and even to reverse symptoms relevant to dementia are currently being examined and results are looking positive^(12,20). The decline in cognitive function in aging people has been linked to an increase in the omega-6 to omega-3 ratio^(21,22). However, a high intake of omega-3 FA’s, specifically fish oil consumption, may help you to retain your thought processing abilities^(2,22). In addition, while intake of saturated fat and cholesterol are linked to an increased risk for dementia and Alzheimer’s disease, omega-3’s are inversely associated with these complications in people age 55 and older⁽²²⁾.

Conclusion: eat more fish

The benefits of consuming polyunsaturated FA’s in a healthy ratio are undeniable. Although many fish oil pills are available, the *American Heart Association* recommends fish sources for most people but does recommend use of dietary supplements for those people with documented coronary heart disease or hypertriglyceridemia and under the direct supervision of a physician.

Omega-3 fatty acids from fish are more effectively used by the body than when administering omega-3 fatty acids in capsule form⁽²³⁾, however, they may be necessary in some cases. A target of 1g of EPA and DHA (*omega-3 FA’s*) per day is difficult to achieve from fish alone and that supplementation may be the only means to achieving adequate intake in some instances⁽¹³⁾.

The beneficial effects of proper nutrition on health as people age are numerous. By incorporating omega-3 FA’s, from fish sources or fish oil supplements, into a diet that is already rich in omega-6 fatty acids, you may benefit by improving heart health and many other age-related health conditions (*life expectancy was even increased in one study using mice*⁽²⁵⁾). While exercising, eating healthy and making smart food choices, especially with regard to omega-3 fatty acids, may or may not increase one’s lifespan, it will improve quality of life as you age and make you feel “timeless.”

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