

[IMAGE]

Fish Oil: Why It's Good For Us

By Julie T. Chen, MD

Most of my patients in my integrative medicine clinic already take fish oil even when they sit down for their first clinic visit. So what I have seen is that many people take fish oil. But I have also seen that some of these people don't know why they are taking the fish oil, they just heard that it's good for them.

So, in an attempt to further support my fish-oil consuming patients, who are doing something good for their body, let me help to delineate some of the health benefits of fish oil.

Omega-3 seems to have many health benefits. The plant version isn't able to be fully converted to EPA and DHA in the human body so many patients opt to take the fish oil version but then supplement with some plant versions for omega-6 and omega-9 to achieve a well-balanced supplementation regimen for their essential fatty acids.

I usually recommend fish oil in a ratio of 2:1 of EPA:DHA for adult patients. In children, the DHA should be higher to help with neurodevelopment. What's interesting is that fish oil is so well-liked in the medical community for its health benefits that it is now even in a prescription form.

Patients with hypertriglyceridemia, the prescription fish oil is given to help with that problem along with dietary change that is lower in sugar and saturated fats.

Other benefits of fish oil include but are not limited to eye diseases, rheumatological diseases like rheumatoid arthritis or lupus, dementia, psychiatric disorders like bipolar disorder or depression, hypertension, diabetes, and even skin disorders like eczema or psoriasis.

The reason for the far-reaching health benefits of fish oil is because omega-3 is utilized in many ways in our body from helping the integrity of our skin to nerve function to decreasing overall inflammation. So, similarly, if it's involved in many processes in our body, the potential benefits are also significant.

One recent study showed concern for taking too much fish oil in regards to cancer risks more so in women, but my general philosophy with supplements and vitamins are that too much of anything is not good. So, I usually tell my patients that the rule of thumb should be that if you don't know why you are taking a

supplement, you probably shouldn't be taking it. You should only ever take supplements that you know are beneficial for a specific health goal. The dosing also should be specific to your health needs.

Many people think that just because it's natural and a supplement, you can't over-do it. That is not true. Many studies show that you can indeed over-do supplements. So, the goal is to treat supplements like a body-friendly medication but a medication none-the-less. Just like you would not take a medication without knowing what it is for and you wouldn't increase the dosing on your own, you also should know why you are taking a supplement and keep at a dosage that is recommended and always clear it with your physicians. If you do this, you will ensure that you are on a safe regimen and dosing program for your supplements.

So, in regards to fish oil, it is indeed a supplement that most people should be on because it addresses so many health issues and can be beneficiary to many people's health. But, you should always clear it by your doctor and clear your dosage by your doctor. Just remember, more isn't necessarily better. But, as I mentioned above, the health benefits of fish oil can be tremendous, so don't be shy about broaching the topic with your doctor...fortunately, fish oil is one of the supplements that most doctors know a lot of information about even if you think your doctor isn't a proponent of supplements in general.

Dr. Julie T. Chen is board-certified in internal medicine and fellowship-trained and board-certified in integrative medicine. She has her own medical practice in San Jose, Calif. She is the medical director of corporation wellness at several Silicon Valley-based corporations, is on several medical expert panels of Web sites and nonprofit organizations, is a recurring monthly columnist for several national magazines, and has been featured in radio, newspaper, and magazine interviews. She incorporates various healing modalities into her practice including, but is not limited to, medical acupuncture, Chinese scalp acupuncture, clinical hypnotherapy, strain-counterstrain osteopathic manipulations, and biofeedback. To learn more, visit www.makinghealthyez.com.

Page printed from:

http://www.toyourhealth.com/mpacms/tyh/article.php?id=1697&no_paginate=true&no_b=true