



## Omega-3 Fatty Acids Are Essential For Health And Wellbeing

A study published in BMJ Medicine Journal,<sup>1</sup> looked at a group of 502,461 UK participants, aged 40-69 years, and the role of fish oils around a variety of effects in relation to cardiovascular health. Commenting on the study, nutritionist, Dr Pamela Mason from the Health and Food Supplements Information Service (HSIS) – [www.hsis.org](http://www.hsis.org) - notes:

“Omega-3 fatty acids are essential for health including heart health and brain health. The European Food Safety Authority allows health claims<sup>2</sup> to be made on a product providing eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexanoic acid (DHA) for:

- The maintenance of normal blood pressure
- The maintenance of normal blood triglycerides (a type of blood fat)
- The maintenance of normal heart function

“In the UK, mean daily consumption of oily fish, which is the main source of omega-3s (DHA and EPA) remains well below the recommended one portion - 140g - a week across all age groups. This amount of oily fish (140g) is approximately equivalent to 500mg omega-3s each day. Oily fish intake per week is 56g for 19–64-year-olds and 84g for older people. As a result, the current intakes of oily fish do not achieve the recommended consumption levels in any age group resulting in a shortfall in omega-3s across the population.

“Looking at the data just published in BMJ Medicine Journal,<sup>3</sup> this involved 502,461 participants, aged 40-69 years, who were enrolled in the UK Biobank Study. The study results suggested that the use of fish oils has a variety of effects on cardiovascular health depending on the individual. This was a highly complex study and observational in nature. Caution is therefore needed in drawing conclusions from this study.

“The study evaluated people with very specific health patterns and excluded people who did not fall into category. Among the 502,461 participants who enrolled in the study, 415,737 completed the trial. Those who were not included in the final data had either dropped out or were excluded according to the research design.

“This was a population-based study where people were invited to take part, so self-selected. Information on the use of fish oil supplements was collected from a verbal interview and touch screen questionnaire during the baseline survey. Omega-3 fatty acids were not measured according to a full dietary record and blood levels of omega-3s were not measured. A total of 31.4 per cent said they took fish oil supplements.

“Of note in this study and in common with UK The National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) data, oily fish intake in the study population was low. The study categorised participants into those who consumed less than two portions of fish a week and those who consumed two or more portions a week. More than eight out of ten (82 per cent) of the 415,737 participants consumed fewer than two portions a week. Fewer than one in five (17.5 per cent) consumed two or more fish portions a week.

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<sup>1</sup> Chen G, et al. BMJMED 2024;3:e000451. doi:10.1136/bmjmed-2022-000451

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/1263>

<sup>3</sup> Chen G, et al. BMJMED 2024;3:e000451. doi:10.1136/bmjmed-2022-000451



“Given the low intake of oily fish across the UK which was confirmed in this population of 415,737 participants, oily fish intake should be improved in order to achieve the health maintenance benefits of omega-3s. However, it is clear that people are not doing this and an intake of omega-3 supplements in recommended amounts may be continued for health maintenance purposes.”

-ENDS-

#### **ABOUT HSIS**

HSIS (the Health and Food Supplements Information Service) is a communication service providing accurate and balanced information on vitamins, minerals, and other food supplements to the media and to health professionals working in the field of diet and nutrition. Find out more at [www.hsis.org](http://www.hsis.org).

**For further information or to arrange an interview with an HSIS spokesperson, please contact the HSIS press office [HSIS@junglecatsolutions.com](mailto:HSIS@junglecatsolutions.com) or call 020 3600 0228. Out of hours please call 07867 513 361.**