



Omega 3 In Question

By Leslie Burman, L.D., R.D.

So you want to plan the perfect Labor day? Chances are some sort of water-themed activity will be in the mix. Taking advantage of our beautiful Atlantic coastline will have beaches, picnics, BBQs., and boating adventures in full throttle. Festive mealtime warrants the same beach going enthusiasm; so a Chinese buffet for lunch would be like wearing white after Labor Day- a definite ill-fitting choice!

Breaking out the seafood would surely hold the momentum but will our hearts thank us for the Budda's steamed vegetables over brown rice in the long run?

Recently, Omega 3 fatty acids have been a big topic of discussion. Large amounts of Omega 3 fatty acids are found in cold water fatty fish. Bluefish, halibut, herring, mackerel, salmon, tuna, are some examples.

Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), and Alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) are the main beneficial ingredients that make up Omega-3 fatty acids. Other non-fish sources include flaxseeds, wheat germ, walnuts, and soybeans. Non-fish sources primarily only have ALA; which is beneficial but not to the establishment of fish sources.

Our diets are much higher in Omega- 6 here in America.

According to the Carcinogenesis in 2005, our diets 60 years ago were 2 to 1 ratio that favor Omega 6 to Omega 3. Today it is 25 to 1. Ideally you would want proper balance of Omega-6 to Omega-3 to be 6 to 1.

Omega –6 fatty acids play a crucial roll in proper functioning; however, we are failing to nutritionally provide ourselves with appropriate ratios. These dietary changes may be related to increased cancer cell growth.

Good sources of Omega –6 include eggs, cereal, poultry, baked goods, margarines and vegetable oils.

One recent article published May 2000 in Biological Psychiatry found participants with a higher Omega 6 to

Omega- 3 ratio showed larger increases in inflammatory responses when they were more stressed. Conversely,

American Journal of Psychiatry in 2003 found association between increased Omega –3 fatty acids and lower rich of depressive symptoms.

Increasing your Omega –3 fatty acids will potentially provide you with an additional wide range of benefits.

There are some studies that indicate Omega-3 fatty acids pay to protect against neurological diseases of aging. Evidence Report/Technology Assessment in 2005 found increased fish consumption was associated with decreased Alzheimer's dementia.

A 17 year prospective Physician's health study showed risk for those with decreased long chain Omega -3 fatty acids was higher of sudden death form cardiac causes. Omega -3 may also help with preventing hypertriglyceridemia. Although more studies are need, one 2004 review study of controlled trial, Lewis, et al found 10 studies that demonstrated decreased triglyceride levels with Omega 3 fatty acid supplementation.

Recently, studies began to examine the correlation between diabetes type 2 and Omega 3. One study published in Circulation 2002, found Omega -3 fatty acids lowered total mortality rates for CHD in woman with type 2 diabetes.

Researchers also suggest that supplementation of Omega 3 fatty acids might decrease the incidence and frequency of epileptic seizures and seizure-associated cardiac arrhythmias; as well as migraine headaches.

If this new wonder food has not done enough Millard et al., found there is and inverse association between breast cancer and Omega -3 fatty acid levels in breast tissue. A higher Omega 3 to 6 ratio may help decrease spread of cancer cell and minimize genes That may increase likelihood of cell manipulation.

It all sounds so good but what about this Mercury thing? All of the bad publicity on increased Mercury levels leads us to shy away from the stuff. Well you can decrease mercury consumption considerably by avoiding those fish that are more likely to have higher mercury levels as; Shark, Swordfish, King Mackerel, and Tilefish. Stick to the fish you know are fine.

Five of the most common fish are; Shrimp, canned LIGHT Tuna, Salmon, Pollock, and Catfish. Larger fish have more mercury content because they have lived longer so they will have the highest accumulation for mercury in there bodies. The FDA recommends that a 120-pound person consumes no more than 38.5 international unites of mercury per week.

The difficultly is that it is not known how much mercury content is in each fish. Also Mercury can linger in the body and build up over time. If you are a woman of childbearing years, you must be aware the risks of high mercury levels of various fish.

Equally, nursing woman can pass contents through the breast milk. With that being said A bit more caution will allow you to benefit enormously from consuming fish high in Omega-3 fatty acids.

Rule of thumb:

Eat a variety of fish and shellfish low in mercury.

Check local advisories about safety of fish caught by friends and family in your area.

www.epa.gov/ost/fish

If you cannot retrieve the information, just eat 6 ounces of the fish and forgo fish for the week. For more information you can contact

www.mercuryaction.org

Enjoy your Father's day festivities even more by filling your plate up with low Mercury level fish, grilled vegetables, sweet potato, and fruit. Sounds so good that you don't have to wear white!

In Good Health,

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N. Katz, R. Nelson, Institute For Natural Resources,
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6:Omega-3 Ratios Enhance Risk for Depression, Inflammatory Disease. April 26, 2007