



Research Behind Omega-3 Testing in Pregnancy

Omega-3 antenatal testing is based on world-leading research led by the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI).

A large review of over 70 international studies involving around 20,000 women found omega-3 supplements in pregnancy reduced the risk of preterm birth. Building on this evidence, SAHMRI led the world's largest clinical trial of omega-3 in pregnancy. They found that omega-3 supplements are most effective for women with low omega-3 levels early in pregnancy, where they reduce the risk of early preterm birth (birth before 34 weeks) by up to 77%.

Higher dose omega-3 supplementation for women with low levels was included in the Australian National Pregnancy Guidelines (2020). SAHMRI and SA Pathology partnered together to move this research into everyday care – making omega-3 testing part of routine early pregnancy care – with no extra appointments needed.



To find out more, visit sahmri.au/omega3

Your Test Results

Your healthcare provider will talk with you about your result and what it means for your pregnancy.

If your omega-3 level is:

BELOW

3.7%

Take high-dose omega-3 supplements until 37 weeks of pregnancy, to reduce the risk of early preterm birth.

Suggested dose: 600-1000mg per day of DHA + EPA (or DHA alone).

DHA and EPA from fish oil are the main types of omega-3. Vegan supplements are available.

3.7%

TO

4.3%

No action required.

If you are already taking omega-3 as part of a multivitamin and mineral supplement or as a standalone supplement, this may continue.

ABOVE

4.3%

Do not take high dose omega-3 supplements.

If you are already taking omega-3 as part of a multivitamin and mineral supplement or as a standalone supplement and wish to continue, the dose of DHA+EPA should not exceed 250mg per day.


*Results are reported as a % of total fatty acids in serum

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Omega-3 Testing in Pregnancy

Giving your baby the best start to life





Omega-3 and your pregnancy

What is omega-3?

Omega-3 fats are nutrients commonly found in fish and algae.

Having enough omega-3 during pregnancy can help your baby be born at full term.

Why omega-3 matters

Babies do best when they are born full term.

Babies born too soon, especially before 34 weeks of pregnancy, often need long stays in hospital. Some may have long term health problems or developmental delays.

Having low omega 3 levels during pregnancy increases the chance of your baby being born too early.

Why have an omega 3 test?

Many women do not get enough omega 3 from their diet alone. This is common and not something you can feel or notice. You cannot tell what your omega 3 level is without a blood test.

Knowing your omega 3 level helps your midwife or doctor decide whether omega 3 supplements are needed, and how much to take.

Healthy omega-3 levels can help reduce the chance of your baby being born too soon.



How the omega-3 test works

This simple test measures the amount of omega-3 in your blood.

No extra blood sample is needed. The test can use the blood you already provide during your first or second trimester screening.

It can also be ordered separately, as long as it is done before 20 weeks of pregnancy.