



Taking omega-3s to give your baby a great start in life

Frequently Asked Questions

How can I get the recommended amount of omega-3 fats from foods?

It is difficult to get the recommended amount of the omega-3s docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) from food alone, unless you regularly eat fatty fish e.g. salmon, sardines or mackerel.

To get the recommended amount of DHA from salmon, you would need to eat at least 2 large serves (150g) of salmon every week or 3 smaller serves (100g) of salmon every week.

Is there mercury, or any other contaminants in omega-3 supplements?

The amount of mercury in fish and fish oils depends on the type of fish and the process used to extract the omega-3s from the fish. While most oils are processed in a way that removes contaminants, it is recommended to check that your omega-3 supplement is low in mercury and other contaminants.

What if I'm already taking a pregnancy multivitamin (e.g. Blackmore's Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Gold, Swisse Pregnancy + Ultivite, Nature's Own Pregnancy Platinum) that contains omega-3?

If you are already taking a multivitamin supplement, you should check the label to find out how much DHA and EPA the supplement contains. Most multivitamin supplements do not contain enough omega-3s to reach the amounts recommended to prevent premature birth and you will need to take an omega-3 supplement in addition, to get the 500mg of DHA per day.

How can I get the omega-3s I need if I'm vegetarian?

The main vegetarian source of the omega-3s DHA and EPA is algal oil. Some eggs and food products contain omega-3 fats but these are still in much lower amounts than the recommended daily dose, so an algal oil supplement that contains at least 500mg of DHA/day is the best vegetarian source.

Are there any side effects of taking omega-3 supplements during pregnancy?

Some women may experience fishy burps as a result of taking fish oil supplements. Taking your fish oil supplements with food may help prevent fishy burps.

If you encounter any other side effects, you should seek medical advice from a health professional.

Should I take more than 1000mg of omega-3 fats per day?

You do not need to take more than 1000mg of DHA plus EPA per day. The research shows that taking more than 1000mg per day will not give you or your baby any extra benefit.

Can I take fish oil supplements if I'm allergic to fish?

If you have a fish allergy, it is advised to speak with a health professional before taking a fish oil supplement.

How much will it cost for me to buy enough omega-3 supplements throughout my pregnancy?

The prices of omega-3 supplements available in pharmacies and supermarkets differ depending on the brand, the amount of omega-3 it contains, and where you purchase them. The omega-3 supplements currently on the shelves that contain the right amount of omega-3s (at least 500mg of DHA and not more than 1000mg of DHA and EPA combined) cost approximately \$25 for a 60-day supply (about 40c per day). You would need to buy 4 bottles if you start taking them from 12 weeks of pregnancy until birth.

I'm pregnant with more than one baby, should I take omega-3 during my pregnancy?

There are not many studies that have looked at omega-3 supplementation in women pregnant with more than one baby, but the available evidence suggests that omega-3 does not prevent premature birth in women pregnant with more than one baby.

I'm planning a pregnancy, should I start taking an omega-3 supplement?

We advise women start taking an omega-3 supplement from 12 weeks of pregnancy.

Can you have too much omega-3?

The optimal daily dose of omega-3 long chain fats is 500 to 1000mg, with at least 500mg being DHA. There is no evidence that taking more omega-3 long chain fats will make a difference to the chances of your baby being born too early.

How do I know which supplement to take?

To choose a supplement that contains more than 500mg of DHA but less than 1000mg of DHA and EPA combined, please look at the nutrition label to find out how much DHA and EPA are in each capsule. Depending on the amounts per capsule, you may need to take more than one capsule.

Please see below for an example:

Active ingredient per capsule:

Concentrated omega-3 triglycerides-fish 1g(1000mg)
Containing omega-3 marine triglycerides 600mg as:
Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) 100mg
Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) 500mg
No added yeast, gluten, wheat, milk derivatives or preservatives.
No added artificial colours or sweeteners.
