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## Eating Guidelines for Omega-3 Fats

Omega-3 fats are heart healthy fats that have many functions in our body. They are important for good health. There are 3 types of omega-3 fats:

1. ALA - alpha-linolenic acid
2. DHA - docosahexaenoic acid
3. EPA - eicosapentaenoic acid.

### ALA:

ALA is called an essential fat because the body cannot make it, so it must be provided in your diet. ALA can be changed in the body to DHA and EPA, but this is very limited. Many scientists think ALA may also have some heart health benefits. More research is needed to confirm this idea.

### DHA and EPA:

DHA and EPA have many health benefits and functions:

- role in brain, nerve, and eye development in infants.
- can help prevent and treat heart disease.
- may help in reducing the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis.
- may help in the prevention of dementia including Alzheimer's disease. Further studies are needed to better determine their role in dementia.



## Steps you can take

Getting ALA in your diet can be easy. Adults 18 and over should aim for 1.1-1.6 grams of ALA each day. Natural food sources of ALA include:

- Flaxseeds
- Hemp seeds and their products
- Flaxseed oil
- Canola and soybean oil
- Soy products
- Walnuts
- Non-hydrogenated margarine made with canola or soybean oil

The best way to get enough DHA and EPA is to eat at least 2 servings of fish a week. One serving is equal to 75 grams (2½ oz) of fish. This will provide about 0.3-0.45 grams of DHA and EPA per day. Choose fatty fish more often, such as:

- Salmon
- Mackerel
- Sardines
- Herring
- Arctic Char
- Anchovies
- Trout

To help your body change ALA to DHA and EPA, avoid foods high in trans and saturated fats and limit other oils such as safflower, sunflower and corn oil.

Follow these easy steps to increase the amount of omega-3 fat in your diet:

1. Use canola or soybean oil for cooking and in recipes.
2. Grind flaxseed to increase the absorption of ALA. Grind the flaxseeds in small batches and store it in the fridge for up to three

months, in a sealed container to keep it fresh.

3. Use flaxseed oil in uncooked salad dressings and dips.
4. Add 60 mL (¼ cup) of walnuts or tofu to a salad.
5. Replace regular eggs with omega-3 eggs
6. Choose non-hydrogenated margarine made with canola and/or soybean oil.
7. Eat a salmon or sardine sandwich for lunch once a week.
8. Have a "fish night" once a week.
9. Include DHA and EPA enriched foods such as: margarine, milk and yogurt.

For more food sources of omega-3 fats, see the "Additional Resources" section below.

Special Considerations:

Do you have heart disease?

Omega-3 fatty acids from fish can help. For most people with heart disease, it is recommended that omega-3 fatty acids be eaten as two or more weekly servings of fish, especially fatty fish or enriched foods. If you are not getting enough Omega-3 fatty acids from your diet, speak to your doctor or dietitian about an omega-3 (DHA and EPA) supplement.

Are you concerned about mercury?

Most fish is safe to eat. Fish provides protein, many nutrients and contains DHA and EPA. There are certain types of fish that need to be avoided or limited due to high mercury levels. For more information on mercury in fish, including a list of safe choices, check out the website listed in the "Additional Resources" section.

If you are trying to become pregnant, or are pregnant or breastfeeding, limit or avoid high mercury fish. Children also need to limit their intake of high mercury fish.



## Additional Resources

- [Food Sources of Omega-3 Fats](#)
- Health Canada, " [Mercury and Fish](#)"

*These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.*



## Notes

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