



Omega-3 fatty acids:
what ... why ... where ...

To your health!

You are the boss of your own body. And that's a good thing, but of course it also brings a certain responsibility with it. Everything that you eat and drink has an influence on the mechanism. The saying 'you are what you eat' is as true as ever today.

To be effective, a boss needs to be a good listener – in this case, to your body – and needs to have access to the right information to take decisions. But the media often sends mixed messages when it comes to food and its influence on the body. Our health charter 'tastes good, good for you' not only guides us in offering a healthy and balanced diet, but also serves to inform our consumers on this subject.

Sodexo informs you through posters about the composition of the meals, and about nutrition, Body Mass Index (BMI) and exercise tips. We also provide a Vitality corner on-site at your company cafeteria: an info stand manned by a dietician who can answer any food related questions. The brochure 'Omega-3' is part of a series of handy booklets, each covering a nutrition-related topic. Written in plain language, with figures that speak for themselves, and packed with handy tips and advice that you can put into practice immediately.

On your supermarket shelves, you can now find a variety of products that feature nutritional supplements such as omega-3. But these healthy fats are also present in an ordinary diet. This brochure offers all the details on which products are good sources of omega-3 and which have a beneficial effect on the organism.



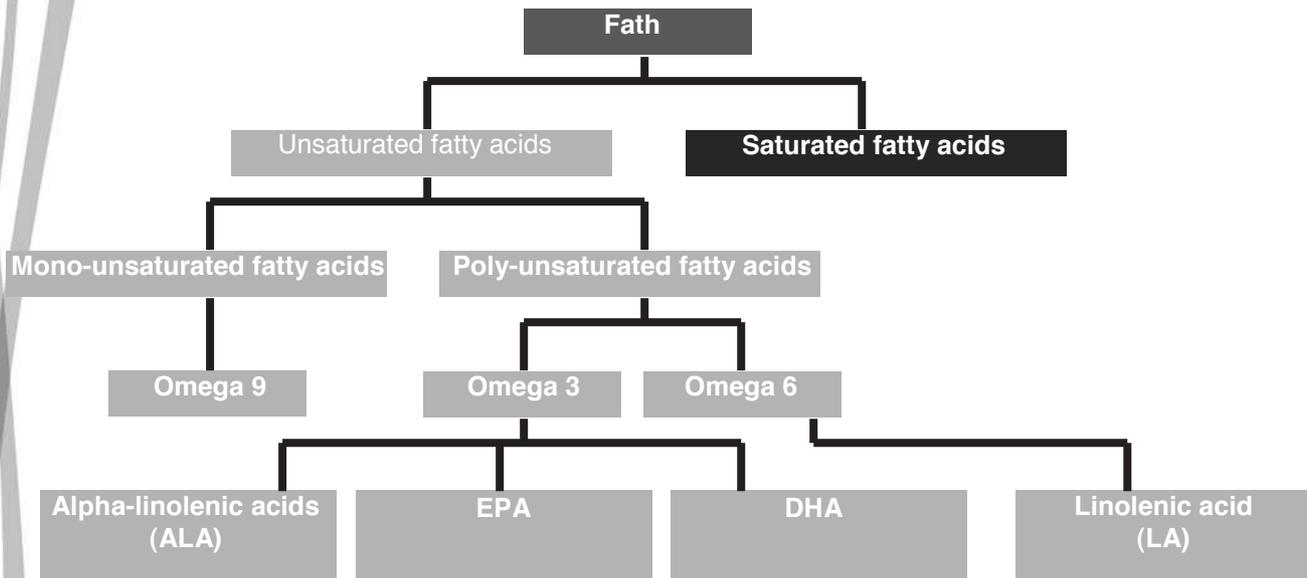
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A. WHAT ARE OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS?

1. The Omega-3 fatty acids

Omega-3 form part of the family of essential fatty acids. In other words, they are one of two types of fatty acids that are indispensable for our body to work properly, just like vitamins and minerals.



Our body isn't able to make fatty acids. That's why your diet must supply them in sufficient quantities. They are, however, all too rarely to be found on our plates!

Recent scientific studies have shown that a sufficient supply of Omega-3 fatty acids has beneficial health effects.

B. WHAT ARE THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS?

1. Omega-3 fatty acids are essential for the growth and for the development of our brains.



This is why it is essential that ***pregnant or breast-feeding women*** eat a sufficient quantity of Omega 3-rich foods. During pregnancy the foetus receives Omega-3 fatty acids through the mother's placenta. The quantity of Omega 3 fatty acids present in the placenta is determined by the mother's diet.

Following birth, the baby receives the vital Omega-3 fatty acids through the mother's milk. Scientists now unanimously agree on the need to enrich baby milk with alpha-linolenic acids (the precursor of the family of Omega 3 fatty acids). The addition of alpha-linolenic acids is now a legal requirement.

Growing ***children*** and ***adults*** also need to eat enough foods containing Omega-3 fatty acids.

Scientific opinion suggests that consumption of Omega 3 fatty acids plays an important role in the development of our ***cerebral functions***. Omega-3 fatty acids also have beneficial effects on ***memory, concentration*** and ***learning abilities***. In addition the presence of Omega 3 DHA fatty acids in neurones, plays an important role in the ***development of the brain***.

2. Omega 3s are beneficial for our mental well-being.

Scientific studies have also established the existence of a link between ***depression*** and a lack of Omega-3 fatty acids.

Modifications in the brain, closely linked with depression, have been observed in people lacking Omega 3s. Those who suffer from depression also show a low level of Omega 3s and an important presence of Omega 6s in their blood.



In countries with a very high consumption of fish, such as Japan, depression is significantly less common than in countries with low levels of fish in their normal diet. It is worth mentioning that fish (especially all fatty fish such as tuna, salmon, etc.) are particularly rich in Omega 3s.

3. Omega 3s strengthen the immune system.

Scientific studies have shown that an excessive consumption of Omega 6 fatty acids can release substances into our bodies that increase the risk of **inflammation**. Links have been established between an excessive consumption of Omega 6s and arthritis (inflammation of the joints), dermatitis, inflammation of the small intestine, and gums, ...

Omega-3 fatty acids have **anti-inflammatory** properties and boost our **immune system**.



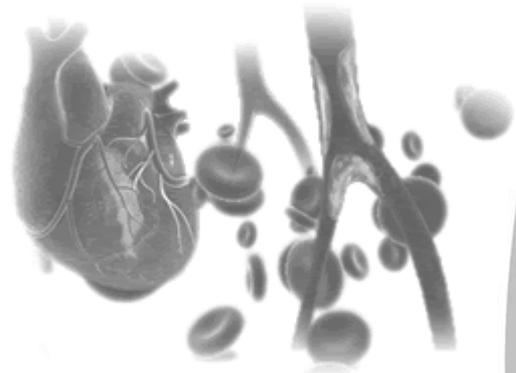
4. Omega-3 fatty acids contribute to the healthy operation of the cardio-vascular system.

Cardio-vascular disease is one of the main causes of death in developed Western countries and it is a major global health problem. Cholesterol has long been considered to be one of the principle risk factors in cardio-vascular disease. Cholesterol is, however, not the sole cause.

Studies have shown that half of those who suffer heart attacks have normal levels of cholesterol. Scientists therefore sought to identify other possible causes, and discovered the role that an imbalance in the intake of Omega 6s and Omega 3s in our diet can play.

Such an imbalance increases the risk of developing cardio-vascular disease. Our Western diet, as you probably know, has an Omega 6/Omega 3 ratio of 15/1, which is really excessive!

The Omega 6/Omega 3 ratios should be between 5/1 and 4/1 to reduce the risk of cardio-vascular disease.



Unlike Omega 6s, the Omega 3 fatty acids do not contribute to reducing cholesterol levels. They do however reduce the risk of cardio-vascular disease through the following actions:

- Omega-3 fatty acids reduce the level of fats in the blood (triglyceride levels).
- Omega-3 fatty acids reduce cardiac rhythm disorders.
- Omega-3 fatty acids prevent the formation of blood clots that can obstruct arteries.
- Omega-3 fatty acids help to maintain the flexibility and fluidity of cell membranes.

C. WHERE CAN YOU FIND OMEGA 3s?

1. Foodstuffs containing Omega-3 fatty acids.

Alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), the precursor acid of the Omega 3 family, cannot be made by our bodies and must therefore be externally supplied by our diet. Our bodies can, however, transform alpha-linolenic acid into two other Omega 3 fatty acids: EPA and DHA. As the transformation process is slow, and the quantities produced are tiny, it is recommended that we consume a sufficient quantity of Omega 3 fatty acids, as set out below:

- Alpha-linolenic acid (ALA): found above all in vegetable oils little used in Western cuisine - rapeseed, linseed, walnut, wheat germ and soya oils.
- EPA and DHA: which are mostly found in fat fish: salmon, mackerel, herring, eel and in fish oils.





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