

Finding Your Way to Enough Omega-3s

Submitted by: Janet Rhea, Marais des Cygnes District Master Food Volunteer

National and international health organizations recommend that we consume an average of 250 to 500 mg of EPA + DHA daily, yet adults in the US consume only about 90 mg per day, a far cry from the amounts recommended to support healthy hearts, eyes, and brains.

The American Heart Association tells us to eat fatty fish at least twice a week to ensure the needed average daily intake of EPA and DHA. No other food naturally provides a hefty dose of these health-boosting fatty acids. Consuming enough EPA and DHA can decrease your risk of having dangerous, abnormal heartbeats; lower your blood triglyceride levels; and slow the formation of plaque in your blood vessels. Because DHA in particular is critical for the development of a baby's eyes and brain, experts recommend that pregnant and breastfeeding woman consume low-mercury fatty fish twice weekly.

Three Ways to EPA + DHA

Fatty fish offer even more than these critical omega-3 fatty acids. Their healthful fats are packaged along with protein, vitamins, and minerals. But not everyone is willing or able to eat fish regularly, so fortified foods and supplements can fill the gap.

1. **Fatty fish:** Some good choices are salmon, trout, tuna, sardines, and herring. The Food and Drug Administration advises pregnant and breastfeeding women, women who may become pregnant, and children to eat light tuna more often than white albacore tuna because light tuna contains less mercury.
2. **Fortified foods:** You will find a variety of foods with added omega-3 fatty acids. If you are not a regular fish eater, seek out those foods fortified specifically with EPA or DHA. Fortified milk, yogurt, and orange juice are just a few items on the supermarket shelves that fill the bill.
3. **Supplements:** These can be a good choice if you can't meet your needs through food alone. It's smart to check in with your healthcare provider before starting new supplements. When choosing a fish oil supplement in a sea of options, look for the total amount of EPA + DHA, not the total amount of fish oil, which will be higher. Be sure to look at the serving size too. For example, a bottle may show that a single softgel contains 1,000 mg of fish oil, but with careful review, you may notice that it has only 500 mg of EPA + DHA for 2 softgels or 250 mg per soft gel. Vegan supplement users can find some algal options. Source: *Communicating Food for Health*

Here's a recipe you might like to try to increase those Omega-3s ---

Salmon Burgers with Sour Cream-Dill Sauce: Prep: 20 min Cook: 8 min 4 servings

Sour Cream-Dill Sauce: 1/3 cup sour cream, 3 Tbs. mayonnaise or salad dressing, 3/4 tsp. dried dill weed

Salmon Burgers - 1 large egg, 2 Tbs. milk, 1 can (14 3/4 oz) red or pink salmon, drained, skin and bones removed and salmon flaked; 2 medium green onions, chopped (2 Tbs.), 1 cup soft bread crumbs (about 1 1/2 slices bread, 1/4 tsp. salt, 1 Tbs. vegetable oil.

In small bowl, stir all sauce ingredients until well mixed; refrigerate until serving. In medium bowl, beat egg and milk with fork or wire whisk. Stir in remaining ingredients except oil. Shape mixture into 4 patties, about 4 inches in diameter. In 10-inch nonstick skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Cook patties in oil about 8 minutes, turning once, until golden brown. Serve with sauce.

Nutrition info for 1 serving: Cal. 390(Cal. from fat 205); Fat. 23g (Sat. Fat. 6g); Chol. 125mg; Sodium. 930mg; Carbs. 22g (Fiber 1g.), Pro. 24g % daily value: Vit. A 6%; Vit. C 0%; Calcium 30%; Iron 16%

Exchanges: 1 1/2 Starch, 3 Medium-fat meat, 1 Fat Carb. Choices: 1 1/2

For more information on this topic or other nutrition updates, contact K-State Research and Extension, Marais des Cygnes District @ 913-294-4306 Paola or 913-795-2829 Mound City or write to: dburnett@ksu.edu or fmeastwo@ksu.edu