

Dear Health Care Professional,

The Promise Institute for Heart Health Nutrition (PIHHN) at promiseinstitute.org is pleased to provide you with e-briefs designed to provide a swift overview of hot, pertinent nutrition information and sensible tips that you can apply to your practice.



This month's e-brief provides a practical approach to omega-3 fatty acids for your patients with information about omega-3s on the food label, food sources, simple meal substitutions and tips to increase omega-3s in the diet.

Enjoy!

Sincerely,



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Omega-3s for Dinner

Omega-3 fatty acids have rapidly gained popularity as healthy nutrients in recent years. With an increasing number of food products bearing the "source of omega-3" claim, more health professionals and consumers are interested in learning about the body's need for specific omega-3 fatty acids.

Omega-3 fatty acids are a type of polyunsaturated fat. The name omega-3 derives from their chemical structure. The first of their many double bonds begins with the third carbon atom from the methyl end of the molecule.¹ The most discussed omega-3s in foods are:

- alpha-linolenic acid (ALA)—an essential fatty acid
- eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA)
- docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)

According to the September 2007 joint position statement from the American Dietetic Association (ADA) and the Dietitians of Canada on Dietary Fatty Acids, omega-3 fatty acids may influence general health, as well as disease risk.²

A Practical Approach to Omega-3

The Dietary Reference Intake report from the Institute of Medicine provides an adequate intake (AI) for omega-3 fatty acids of 1100 mg and 1600 mg for women and men, respectively. Adequate intakes are established when a Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for a nutrient cannot be set.

Many foods contain omega-3 fatty acids. However, it can be challenging to find options that also are low in saturated fat, cholesterol, and with zero grams of trans fat. Translating the omega-3 discussion into foods with your patients can help them make the best choices in the most convenient and enjoyable way.

While an AI is a recommendation for daily intake, the Daily Value (DV) is provided on a nutrition facts label (shown as a percentage) to help consumers see how a food fits into an overall diet by comparing its nutrient content with recommended intakes of those nutrients.

Omega-3 Fatty Acid	Daily Value*
ALA	1300 mg
EPA/DHA	130 mg
DHA	160 mg

*THE ABOVE DAILY VALUES HAVE BEEN RECOMMENDED BY MANUFACTURERS OF OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS AND ARE CURRENTLY USED AS THE BASIS FOR LABELING CERTAIN FOODS WITH CLAIMS ABOUT LEVELS OF THESE NUTRIENTS. FDA HAS PROPOSED TO USE A DAILY VALUE OF 1600 mg ALA FOR THIS PURPOSE AND HAS PROPOSED NOT TO ACCEPT THE RECOMMENDATIONS ABOVE.

AI, RDA and DV

Adequate Intake (AI)	Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA)	Daily Value (DV)
The recommended average daily intake level based on observed or experimentally determined approximations or estimates of nutrient intake by a group (or groups) of apparently healthy people that are assumed to be adequate—used when an RDA cannot be determined.	The average daily dietary nutrient intake level sufficient to meet the nutrient requirement of nearly all (97 to 98 percent) healthy individuals in a particular life stage and gender group.	Reference term on food labels to aid consumers in selecting a healthy diet; consists of two sets of references – the reference daily intakes (RDIs) and daily reference values (DRVs) – expressed as percentages.

Helping Consumers Understand Omega-3 on the Label

Currently, nutrient content claims are allowed on the labels of food products. Determining what this means can be a challenge for consumers. The following table reviews just the numbers based on which certain nutrient content claims may be made (amounts are expressed per reference amount that is customarily consumed (RACC), which is how the FDA defines a “serving” of a food).³

Claim on the Label	ALA Omega-3	EPA/DHA Omega-3
High, Excellent Source, Rich	260 mg	130 mg
Good Source, Contains, Provides	130 mg	N/A
More, Fortified with, Added, Extra, Plus	130 mg more than the reference food	N/A

Here is a more detailed view of what your patients may see on the label and a description of what is required based on the authorized US nutrient content claims for omega-3 fatty acids.⁴

“High in ALA omega-3,” “Excellent source of ALA omega-3” or “Rich in ALA omega-3”

- Contains 260 mg or more of ALA (20% or more of the DV for ALA) per serving
- Must include the Daily Value for ALA (1300 mg), the % of the Daily Value per serving that the food contains, and the level of ALA per serving

“Good Source of ALA omega-3,” “Contains ALA omega-3” or “Provides ALA omega-3”

- Contains 130 mg or more of ALA (10-19% of the DV for ALA) per serving
- Must include the Daily Value for ALA (1300 mg), the % of the Daily Value per serving that the food contains, and the level of ALA per serving

“More ALA,” “Fortified with ALA,” “Enriched with ALA,” “Added ALA,” “Extra ALA,” or “Plus ALA”

- Contains 130 mg or more of ALA (10% or more of the DV for ALA) than a reference food per serving
- Must include the Daily Value for ALA (1300 mg), the comparative % of the Daily Value that the food and the reference food contain, AND the number of milligrams of ALA omega-3 in the food and reference food per serving

“High in EPA/DHA omega-3,” “Excellent source of EPA/DHA omega-3” or “Rich in EPA/DHA omega-3”

- Contains 130 mg or more of EPA or DHA (the DV for EPA/DHA) per serving (alternatively, this claim may currently be made based on 32 mg combined DHA and EPA).
- Must include the Daily Value for EPA/DHA (130 mg), the % of the Daily Value per serving that the food contains, and the level of EPA/DHA per serving

“High in DHA omega-3,” “Excellent source of DHA omega-3” or “Rich in DHA omega-3”

- Contains 32 mg or more of DHA (20% or more of the DV for DHA) per serving
- Must include the Daily Value for DHA (160 mg), the % of the Daily Value that the food contains, and the level of DHA per serving

Proposed Changes to Claims

At this time, the claims described above are permitted. However, in the fall of 2007, FDA proposed to permit only “high” claims for 320 mg ALA and “good source” and “more” claims for 160 mg ALA. Claims for EPA/DHA would not be permitted (except for quantity statements such as “contains X mg EPA and DHA”). The proposal is being considered by the FDA and will be revisited after collecting comments and feedback in February 2008.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids in Foods

Category	Food Item	Serving Size	Calories	Chol (mg)	SFA (g)	ALA (mg)	EPA (mg)	DHA (mg)
Butter, Margarine and Condiments	Butter	1 Tbsp	102	31	7.3	0	0	0
	Hellmann's Mayonnaise	1 Tbsp	103	0	1.6	700	0	0
	Margarine, 70% vegetable oil spread	1 Tbsp	87	0	1.8	200	0	0
	Promise [®] Buttery Spread	1 Tbsp	80	0	1.5	550	0	0
	Promise [®] Light Spread	1 Tbsp	45	0	1.0	300	0	0
	Promise activ [®] Buttery Spread	1 Tbsp	80	0	1.0	425	0	0
	Promise activ [®] Light Spread	1 Tbsp	45	0	0.5	275	0	0
Nuts and seeds	Almonds, dry roasted	1 oz	169	0	1.1	0	0	0
	Cashews, dry roasted	1 oz	163	0	2.6	0	0	0
	Pecans, dry roasted	1 oz	201	0	1.8	300	0	0
	Walnuts	1 oz	185	0	1.7	2600	0	0
	Sunflower Seeds	1 oz	168	0	2.0	0	0	0
Oils	Flaxseed Oil	1 Tbsp	120	0	1.3	7200	0	0
	Olive Oil	1 Tbsp	119	0	1.9	100	0	0
	Canola Oil	1 Tbsp	124	0	1.0	1300	0	0
	Coconut Oil	1 Tbsp	117	0	11.8	0	0	0
	Palm Oil	1 Tbsp	117	0	11.1	0	0	0
	Soybean Oil	1 Tbsp	104	0	2.0	700	0	0

	Safflower Oil	1 Tbsp	120	0	0.8	0	0	0
Fish	Sardines	1 Tbsp	123	97	4.1	200	1400	1400
	Herring Fish	3 oz	173	65	2.2	100	800	900
	Salmon	3 oz	175	54	2.1	100	600	1200
	Snapper	3 oz	109	40	0.3	0	0	200
	Trout	3 oz	162	63	1.3	200	200	600
	Shrimp	3 oz	85	214	0.2	3	249	214
	Tuna, light, canned in water	3 oz	99	26	0.2	0	0	200
	Cod, Atlantic	3 oz	65	47	0.1	1	3	131
Meat and animal products	Ground Beef, 85% lean	3 oz	218	76	4.9	100	0	0
	Chicken Breast	3 oz	142	73	0.9	0	0	0
	Pork, Tenderloin	3 oz	159	80	1.9	0	0	0
	Ham	3 oz	133	47	1.6	500	0	0
	Egg	1 lg egg	78	212	1.6	0	0	0
	Omega-3 Fortified egg	1 lg egg	70	180	1.0	100	100	200

Source: USDA Nutrient Database

Did you know? Humans convert small amounts of ALA to EPA and DHA (5% to EPA; <0.5% to DHA).⁵

Making an Omega-3 Meal Plan

As a health care professional, you may already advise your patients to get more omega-3 by enjoying fish a twice a week or grabbing a handful of nuts on the go. Here is a “before and after” makeover to help your patients easily include a variety of omega-3-containing foods into their meals and snacks:

Meal	If you're having this...	Tweak like this for more omega-3...
Breakfast	Whole grain toast with butter and grape jelly 1 hardboiled egg Banana	Whole grain toast with Promise® Buttery Spread 1 hardboiled omega-3 fortified egg Banana
Mid-morning snack	1/2 Oat bran muffin with butter	1/2 Oat bran muffin with Promise® Buttery Spread
Lunch	Turkey sandwich on whole wheat bread with mustard, mayonnaise and lettuce 1 oz bag of baked potato chips 2 cups tossed salad with cucumbers and carrots with ranch dressing	Tuna salad sandwich on whole wheat bread with mayonnaise and lettuce 1 oz bag of baked potato chips 2 cups tossed salad with cucumbers and carrots, sprinkled with canola oil balsamic vinaigrette
Afternoon pick-me-up	1 oz of crackers 1 cup of hot tea	1 oz pecans, walnuts, or almonds 1 cup of hot tea

Dinner	Quesadilla with sautéed chicken breast with low fat cheese and black beans Chunky salsa Low fat sour cream Spinach salad with chopped tomatoes and ranchero ranch dressing	Quesadilla with chicken breast sautéed in Promise® Buttery Spread with bell peppers, onions, low fat cheese and black beans Chunky salsa Low fat sour cream Spinach salad with chopped tomatoes and a cilantro, garlic powder, canola oil and lime juice dressing
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In addition to the menu makeover, here are some tips to help your patients include more omega-3 in their day:

1. Enjoy the catch of the day! Encourage your patients to dine on fatty fish such as tuna, mackerel, salmon, herring, trout, or sardines at least twice a week. Help them find healthy recipes that feature these fish and encourage them to try new types when they're in a rut.
2. Find your omega-3 fatty acids from plant-based sources:
 - Top salads with canola-based dressings, and sprinkle with ground flaxseed or walnuts.
 - Add unsalted walnuts or ground flaxseed to oatmeal, cold cereal or a yogurt parfait.
 - Replace butter and stick margarines with soft margarines and vegetable oil blends that offer ALA. The key is to advise patients to compare labels—look for the lowest saturated fat blend they can find, with zero grams of trans fat per serving.
 - Bake with healthy vegetable oils and soft margarines.
 - Stir fry or sauté with canola oil or soft margarines.
3. Check for new and improved products that have omega-3. In addition to oils and spreads omega-3 are added to many foods such as mayonnaise, salad dressings, eggs, pastas and baked goods.

References

1. Holub DJ and Holub BJ. Molecular and Cellular Biochemistry 2004; 263:217-25.
2. Position of the American Dietetic Association and Dietitians of Canada: Dietary Fatty Acids. JADA 2007;107(9):1599-1611.
3. Covington MB. Am Fam Physician 2004 July 1;70(1):133-40.
4. CFSAN/Office of Nutritional Products, Labeling, and Dietary Supplements, September 2003; Updated August 2005, November 2005, and April 2007: <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/qhc-sum.html#omega3>.
5. Flourde M, Cunnane SC. Appl Physiol Nutr Metab. 2007 Aug;32(4):619-34.

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