

# Omega-3 and Omega-6 Fats: It's a Balancing Act

## *What are omega-3 and omega-6 fats?*

Omega-3 and omega-6 are types of essential fatty acids. They are considered essential because we need them for our bodies to work properly, and cannot be made from other fats. Instead, we have to obtain them from our diet. Omega-3 and omega-6 differ in their chemical structure and function.

## *Why are they important?*

Research has shown that omega-3 plays an important role in brain function and can reduce inflammation in the body. This may help lower the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and arthritis. Omega-6 is also vital to overall health but is needed in much smaller quantities. Too much omega-6 has the opposite effect and can increase inflammation.

Unfortunately, the average American diet contains a lot of processed foods, which have much more omega-6 than omega-3. It is important to eat well-balanced, nutritious meals to keep omega-3 and omega-6 fats in balanced.



## How to Lower Your Omega-6 Intake and Boost Omega-3

- ✓ Change your cooking oil from vegetable oils such as corn oil to heart healthy oils such as olive oil and grape seed oil.
- ✓ Limit the processed or boxed foods you consume, which usually contain huge amounts of omega-6 vegetable and canola oils.
- ✓ Switch to fat-free or low-fat versions of your favorite foods. This will lower the amount of omega-6 fats and decrease the calorie content.
- ✓ Balance the amount of omega-6 and omega-3 foods you eat. Instead of reaching for the pre-packaged pastries, grab a handful of fresh, healthful nuts and seeds to boost omega-3 in your diet.
- ✓ Contrary to popular belief, you don't have to eat fish every day to get the recommended amount of omega-3 fats. Two servings of fish a week will usually meet the recommendation.

***Balance the amount of Omega-3 and Omega-6 fats in your diet. Aim for a healthy ratio of FOUR omega-3 to ONE omega-6 rich food sources per day.***

### Food Sources Rich in Omega-3

- ▲ Flax Seeds
- ▲ Walnuts
- ▲ Salmon
- ▲ Sardines
- ▲ Soybean/Tofu
- ▲ Olive Oil
- ▲ Halibut
- ▲ Scallops
- ▲ Shrimp
- ▲ Omega-3 Rich Eggs
- ▲ Tuna
- ▲ Pumpkin Seeds
- ▲ Brazil Nuts
- ▲ Grapeseed Oil

### Food Sources Rich in Omega-6

- ▲ Vegetable Oil
- ▲ Margarine (hydrogenated)
- ▲ Processed baked goods that contain shortening or oils
- ▲ Mayonnaise

