

Living { Nutrition Know-How

5 reasons to love fat *continued*

1. Fight those aches

How omega-3s help: Researchers at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center found that nearly two-thirds of patients suffering from chronic neck and back pain stopped needing anti-inflammatory pain pills after taking fish-oil pills for 20 to 30 days. The key may be omega-3s' ability to fight inflammation.

How to get them: You don't necessarily have to take the pills, says Joseph C. Maroon, MD, a University of Pittsburgh neurosurgeon. Cold-water ocean fish (salmon, mackerel, herring) and lake trout are the best sources of anti-inflammatory omega-3s.

2. Stay slim

How omega-3s help: Mood swings can lead to bring-on-the-brownies moments that sabotage your efforts to lose weight. Omega-3s may help by stabilizing your moods, says Douglas Bibus, PhD, an omega-3 researcher and scientist at the University of Minnesota's Academic Health Center.

Omega-3 FAQs Your 1-minute reality check



How much of the good fats do I need each day?

That's open to debate, but the Institute of Medicine says 1.1 grams (1,100 milligrams) a day is enough for women. You may need a combination of foods and supplements to reach that level. Studies indicate more is probably better.



Will supplements give me fishy breath or burps?

A fishy odor or after-taste is usually a sign of a poorly made product. Before buying, look for the words "molecularly distilled" on the label, a sign that any yucky stuff has been removed.



Isn't fish risky because of all the contaminants?

Mercury and PCBs are cause for concern. But experts say seafood is safe for most of us as long as it's limited to about two meals per week. For more info, go to www.epa.gov/waterscience/fishadvice/advice.html.

How to get them: Bibus recommends taking a high-quality supplement for 30 days. If you don't notice a difference, increase your dosage.

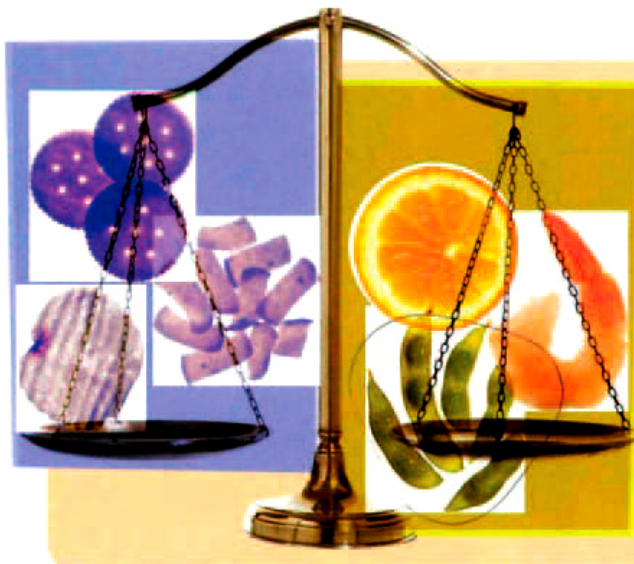
3. Have more "up" days

How omega-3s help: Another form of omega-3s known as DHA makes up 25

percent of your body's brain fat and manages the production and flow of the feel-good chemical serotonin. People who battle depression seem to be DHA-deficient.

How to get them: Researchers believe a DHA supplement may be a gentler (and ultimately more effective) →

White space



Balance your fats

Omega-3s' wonky name refers to the fat's chemical makeup—how it's structured in the third space from the end of its carbon chain. Too much science? Just remember it's a good fat because your body uses it to make certain hormonelike substances that fight inflammation.

But keep in mind that omega-3s won't help if you eat a lot of crackers, chips, and full-fat salad dressings. Those are full of omega-6s, fats that increase inflammation and may even compete with omega-3s for your body's attention. "I urge my patients to go on an anti-inflammatory diet, much like the Mediterranean diet—low in meat, butter, and junk food," says Joseph C. Maroon, MD, a University of Pittsburgh neurologist.

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