

Omega 3 Fatty Acids and the Eyes

Omega 3 fatty acids help prevent inflammation which is one of the causes of macular degeneration. These fats may be obtained through foods and / or supplements; 1,000-1,500 mg. total of EPA + DHA (which are the important related components of omega 3 fatty acids) is the ideal amount per day. Too much can increase risk for hemorrhagic stroke; the amount that increases this risk is yet to be determined by nutritional experts; this amount is well below the possible danger zone.

The best omega 3 source is saltwater fatty fish: salmon, halibut, mackerel, sardines and other fish. Second best sources include; shrimp and scallops. The smaller the fish, the less the risk of contaminants (when big fish eat small fish they retain contaminants in the digestive process). Some experts also feel wild fish are healthier than farmed and that a Pacific source is better than Atlantic. The amount of EPA and DHA per gram of fat varies in different fish species; 4 – 8 ounces of fish / day is usually a good range to aim for.

Omega 3's are also obtainable through certain vegetable sources such as flaxseeds (ground flaxseed is best for absorption), hemp seeds, soybeans and walnuts. Women absorb more omega 3 fat from them than men; calculating the exact amount of omega 3 you are actually obtaining is more complicated than through fish or supplement sources.

Read the label if taking supplements to see exactly how much EPA and DHA they contain; verify they are pharmaceutical grade. Health and bulk food stores and those that sell organic foods are often the best retailers of these products.

Excellent sources of information pertaining to eye health; is Dr. Andrew W. Weil entitled "Healthy Aging", published by Anchor Books. It discusses numerous general health issues, many of which relate to the eye; inflammation is briefly referred to in chapter 9, bottom of pg. 174; it's ISBN: 978-0-307-27754-1.