



Holistic Medical Centre

Dr Helen Smith, Dr Jackie Mills, Dr Fiona Gordon,
Dr Glenn Twentyman. Dr Inga Schader. Nurse: Karin Milliken
Naturopaths: Rebecca Jones & Nelly Graham-Stewart
www.holisticmedicalcentre.co.nz

103 Pt Chevalier Rd
Pt Chevalier
Ph 09 815 0567

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What's the big deal about fish oil?

You may have heard about fish oil being useful for mood and cognitive function. There are some very good trials to support this but recent research may provide some clues as to why. Fish oil contains Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) but the DHA portion is the most important in this regard. In fact, 11% of the dry weight (excluding water) of the brain is made up of DHA. The richest source of DHA in the body is in the nerve endings that enable the nerves to communicate with other nerves (synaptic membrane). It also appears that there is an ongoing flux of fatty acids in nerve cells throughout our lives. Lower brain levels of DHA have been found in patients with major depressive disorders. Vegetable sources of omega 6 oils such as that found in flaxseed oil do not readily convert to DHA and in one study the levels of RBC (red blood cell) levels of DHA were a bit under half that of omnivores (fish/meat eaters). Vegetarians will need to ensure adequate sources of zinc, magnesium and vitamin B6 to ensure that as much omega 6 oil as possible converts to

DHA. This means lots of nuts, seeds and leafy greens such as kale. Many traditional diets contain a 1:1 ratio in regards to omega 3 and omega 6 oils. The modern western diet has an over abundance of vegetable oils RELATIVE to fish oils and the ratio is more likely to be 1:20 in the average diet. We are not advocating treating depression with fish oils but keeping the nervous system in optimum condition and having fantastic nutritional status can certainly help as many of you can attest to after taking your vitamin D prescription.

During pregnancy it is well known that the mother's nutritional status can suffer if there is insufficient nutrients to support both mother and a growing baby. Supplementation with DHA during pregnancy has been shown to reduce the risk of pre term delivery, low birth weight and pre-eclampsia (condition which can occur during pregnancy which is characterized by very high blood pressure). DHA has also been associated with a decreased risk of postnatal depression as well as helping

with some of the confusion and lack of concentration that can occur during pregnancy. Some outward signs that may be present is if the skin becomes very dry and some expectant mums find they get a flare or new occurrence of eczema. This may also help lower the chances of stretch marks as oils do contribute to the elasticity of the skin. If you are wondering how the baby would benefit from maternal supplementation of DHA then there are a few studies available. Better hand-eye coordination, higher scores on vocabulary and language comprehension, advanced attention spans and decreased risk of behavioral problems. If you are considering supplementation with fish oil for the DHA content then you are best to go for a DHA supplement where there is a predominant amount of DHA as it is advisable to have 1200 mg of DHA/day minimum in the first 2 trimesters and 2400mg in the last trimester. While lactating 2400mg is ideal initially going down to 1200mg/day toward weaning.

Our favourite quote

"I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free."

Michelangelo Buonarroti
1475-1564

Health tips

Think about having an electrolyte solution if you seem to lose as much water as you drink and are always thirsty. Frequent thirst is also a sign of diabetes so this should be excluded by your doctor.

Happy Patient File

Our nurse's mother is in a rest home out of Auckland and the doctor wanted to put her on anti-depressants. Karin and her family did not want this so we organised some nutrients and some 5HTP. After she lost her temper with one of the staff, the staff insisted that the 5HTP be stopped and the mental health team recommended anti-psychotic medication be started. We sent a letter and information in support of natural options. After 2 weeks off the 5HTP, family had to be called every second night to settle her so the family wanted the 5HTP to be reinstated. After a week the family had not been called once and her anxiety, confusion and agitation were significantly improved to the surprise and delight of the staff.

More information

We have previously mentioned iodine and its importance for breast health and thyroid function but it has recently come to light that it is very important for foetal development especially brain development. If you are pregnant please do get a urine test to measure your levels and ensure your pregnancy multi contains iodine. If not you will need to add an iodine supplement. If you are adding an iodine supplement, the dose would de-

pend on your current iodine status.

It is very interesting to note that vitamin D levels for people living in sunny countries sit somewhere between 135-225. More interesting is that we are currently only focusing on getting Vitamin D levels over 100! A great proportion of bone mass is laid down in the teens so young women should really be ensuring the vitamin D levels are adequate to ensure calcium

can be absorbed and good bone mass is encouraged as early as possible. Sensible sun exposure and cod liver oil. Some new information on how vitamin D may have a role in preventing cancer. Vitamin D appears to promote cell differentiation which is another way of saying it helps cells mature (cancer cells are immature cells that lack normal cell function and the trigger for activating normal cell death is

missing).

The next two articles published in the UN declaration of Human rights;

Article III

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person

Article IV

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.