



# Omega 3 fats when you are pregnant

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## What are omega 3 fats?

Omega 3 fats are a type of polyunsaturated fat. Everyone needs to include omega 3 fats in their diet for good health.

## What is DHA?

DHA (**D**ocosah**ex**ae**n**oic **A**cid) is a type of omega 3. When you are pregnant, your baby needs DHA for healthy development of his or her brain and eyes.

Studies show that pregnant mothers who include food sources of DHA during the 2nd and 3rd trimesters have children with improved:

- eye and hand coordination
- listening and language skills
- problem solving

than the children of mothers who did not include DHA during pregnancy.

**It is recommended that you have 200 mg DHA each day during pregnancy.**

Infants and young children also need DHA for further brain and eye development. When you eat foods with DHA, it will be present in your breastmilk.

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## What foods have DHA?

DHA is found in fatty fish. However, some fish contain mercury and must be avoided in childbearing years (see page 3).

DHA is also found in other foods listed on page 4.

## What fish can I eat?

Fish you can eat that are high in DHA and low in mercury are:

<b>Fish</b>	<b>DHA (mg) in each 3 oz or 100 gram serving</b>
Salmon, farmed	1300
Anchovies	1290
Trout, rainbow	820
Tuna, light canned (yellow fin and skipjack)	700
Salmon, wild	600
Pollock	450
Sardines (in oil, drained)	321
Cod	154
Shrimp	144
Tilapia	130
Sole	106

Eat 3 ounces or 100 grams of fish, 2 times a week to ensure a healthy intake of DHA during pregnancy.

Avoid raw or undercooked fish during pregnancy to reduce the risk of a foodborne illness (also called food poisoning).

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## Which fish should I avoid?

Some fish are high in mercury. This toxin can affect the development of the brain.

**Avoid** these fish in pregnancy and in the childbearing years:

- Shark
- Tilefish
- Albacore tuna (white) – fresh and frozen
- Swordfish
- Marlin
- Escolar
- Orange roughy

Other freshwater fish available in Ontario may also need to be avoided. For information on toxin levels in commonly caught fish in Ontario see “Guide to Eating Ontario Sport Fish” at:

<http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/publications/590b14.pdf>

## Can I take an omega 3 supplement instead of eating fish?

Yes. There are many brands of omega 3 supplements available. Choose a supplement that contains at least 200 mg DHA for a capsule or serving. Take the supplement with food to prevent reflux.

Avoid fish liver oil sources, because they are very high in vitamin A.

Visit the website [www.ifosprogram.com](http://www.ifosprogram.com) to make sure your supplement meets approved standards of DHA and other ingredients.

## Who should not take Omega 3 supplements?

People who currently take blood thinners such as aspirin and warfarin should not take omega 3 supplements. Omega 3 supplements may prolong bleeding times. It is advised for these people to get their Omega 3 from fish and other dietary foods rather than from supplements.

## What other foods have DHA?

Other foods that have DHA include:

Food	Serving	DHA (mg)
omega 3 eggs	1 egg	75 to 125
Danone Danino Yogurt	100 gram	40
So Good Omega DHA Soy Beverage	1 cup (250 ml)	10 to 20
Dairy Oh! – DHA enriched milk	1 cup (250 ml)	10 to 20
chicken breast, cooked	3 oz (100 g)	12

Including these foods can help provide you with enough DHA in pregnancy and when breastfeeding. It is recommended that you have 200 mg DHA each day during pregnancy.

Other foods may contain DHA as an added ingredient. Read labels carefully to help you increase the DHA in your diet.

## What if I do not eat eggs, fish or other dairy? How can I get my DHA?

An Algae based DHA is available in Health Food Shops in either capsules or oil. It is called Udo's Choice DHA Oil Blend.

## Can I get too much DHA?

No. Currently there is no upper limit to the amount of DHA to take daily.

## For more information

Visit the website [www.dhaomega3.org](http://www.dhaomega3.org)