

Choosing Fish Oil Products

Dosage:

- 300-500 mg daily is roughly equivalent to two servings of fish per week, as recommended by the American Heart Association.
- For heart health, 1000 mg per day may be adequate.
- For inflammatory diseases, the daily dosage of total EPA+DHA tested in studies has ranged from 1000-6000 mg daily.
- For depression, studies have tested a 2,500 mg daily dosage (consisting of 1,670 mg EPA and 830 mg DHA), taken for eight weeks.
- A prescription fish oil, Lovaza, used to treat cholesterol abnormalities, is prescribed at 4,000 mg per day. It provides 840 mg of EPA+DHA per 1000 mg capsule (an 84% concentration), of which approximately 465 mg is EPA and 375 mg is DHA.
- For most purposes, Dr. Leigh suggests 1000 mg 1-3 times daily.

What's in the capsule?

- Only about a third of the oil from fish is EPA and DHA, although this may be higher (up to about 85% as EPA and DHA) in a "concentrated" product.
- The ratio of EPA to DHA will vary. Products made from menhaden and other small oily fish, for example, tend to have a ratio of EPA to DHA of 1.5:1 so that a capsule claiming 1 gram (1,000 mg) of fish oil, of which 30% is EPA + DHA, provides 180 mg of EPA and 120 mg of DHA.
- Salmon oil naturally contains more DHA than EPA (often several times more).
- Products made only from algae will contain only DHA.

Toxicity:

- To avoid contaminants, choose oils from small, oily fish that are low in food chain, such as anchovy, sardines or menhaden.
- Avoid fish "liver" oils, which contain high levels of vitamin A, which is toxic at excessive doses.
- Most mercury is found in fish meat and not fish oil. Fish liver oils may contain more contaminants than whole-fish oils.
- All products met their label claims for omega-3's, weren't contaminated by mercury, lead, or PCBs, and weren't spoiled.

Where to obtain:

If not available in your local stores, you may obtain these by mail from the distributor, or from a mail-order internet source like Drugstore.com, iHerb.com, or Amazon.com.

Examples of products:

Swanson EFAs Super EPA (Swanson Health Products)

EPA 300 mg + DHA 200 mg per serving (label suggests 1 per day)
Relative conc. EPA+DHA: High, 500 mg per very lg (> 1 inch) softgel
1¢ per 100 mg of EPA+DHA (\$6/month for 2000 mg as 4 pills/day)

Trader Joe's Molecularly Distilled Omega-3 Fatty Acids - Odorless

EPA 400 mg + DHA 200 mg per serving (label suggests 1 per day)
Relative conc. EPA+DHA: High, 600 mg per very lg (> 1 inch) softgel
2¢ per 100 mg of EPA+DHA (\$10.80/month for 1800 mg as 3 pills/day)

CVS Pharmacy Natural Fish Oil 1000 mg (CVS Pharmacy)

EPA 507 mg + DHA 332 mg per serving (label suggests 3 per day)
Relative conc. EPA+DHA: Mod, 280 mg per very lg (> 1 inch) softgel
3¢ per 100 mg of EPA+DHA (\$17.60/month for 1960 mg as 7 pills/day)

Life Extension Super Omega-3 (Quality Supplements & Vitamins, Inc.)

EPA 1,400 mg + DHA 1,000 mg per serving (label suggests 4 per day)
Relative conc. EPA+DHA: High, 600 mg per very lg (> 1 inch) softgel
3¢ per 100 mg of EPA+DHA (\$16.20/month for 1800 mg as 3 pills/day)

Res-Q 1250 (N3 Oceanic, Inc.)

EPA 1,560-2,580 mg + DHA 1,200-1,950 mg per serving (label suggests 4-6 per day)
Relative conc. EPA+DHA: Very high, 690 mg per very lg (> 1 inch) softgel
3¢ per 100 mg of EPA+DHA (\$18.60/month for 2070 mg as 3 pills/day)

Vitamin Shoppe Meg-3 Fish Oil EPA-DHA (Vitamin Shoppe)

EPA 300-600 mg + DHA 200-400 mg per serving (label suggests 1-2 per day)
Relative conc. EPA+DHA: High, 500 mg per lg (1 inch) softgel
3¢ per 100 mg of EPA+DHA (\$18/month for 2000 mg as 4 pills/day)

Vitamin World Omega-3 Fish Oil 1000 mg (Vitamin World, Inc.)

EPA 473 mg + DHA 305 mg per serving (label suggests 3 per day)
Relative conc. EPA+DHA: Mod, 260 mg per lg (1 inch) softgel
3¢ per 100 mg of EPA+DHA (\$18.70/month for 2080 mg as 8 pills/day)

Puritan's Pride Natural Omega-3 Fish Oil 1000 mg (label suggests 3 per day, Similar to Vitamin World Omega-3 Fish Oil, above.

Based on data from ConsumerLab. com, *Product Review: Fish Oil and Omega-3 Fatty Acid Supplements*, 12/8/2011

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