

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225) to make an appointment.

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Cancer Center

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Omega-3, also called omega-3 fatty acids, mainly comes from fish oil, such as krill oil and cod liver oil. It's also found in foods like flaxseed, linseed oil, walnuts, and chia seeds.

## What are the potential uses and benefits?

Omega-3 may be useful for:

- Reducing fatty deposits on the inside of your arteries
- Preventing heart disease
- Managing depression
- Lowering cholesterol levels
- Preventing cancer
- Treating symptoms of lupus (an autoimmune disease)

Omega-3 also has other uses that haven't been studied by doctors to see if they work.

It's generally safe to have omega-3 in your diet. Talk with your healthcare providers before taking supplements. They can interact with some medications and affect how they work. For more information, read the "What else do I need to know?" section below.

## What are the side effects?

Side effects of using omega-3 may include:

- A fishy taste in your mouth
- Diarrhea (loose or watery bowel movements)
- Nausea (feeling like you're going to throw up)

## What else do I need to know?

- Omega-3 fatty acids and omega-6 fatty acids are not the same. Omega-6 is found in evening primrose oil and borage oil, and has different effects on the body.
- Don't take omega-3 if you're taking blood thinners such as aspirin, heparin, warfarin (Coumadin<sup>®</sup>, Jantoven<sup>®</sup>), clopidogrel (Plavix<sup>®</sup>), apixaban (Eliquis<sup>®</sup>), or rivaroxaban (Xarelto<sup>®</sup>). There are others, so be sure to talk to your healthcare provider before taking omega-3. Omega-3 can increase your risk of bleeding.
- Don't take omega-3 if you're taking glucocorticoids, such as cortisone, hydrocortisone or dexamethasone. Omega-3 supplements can worsen some side effects caused by glucocorticoids.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

Omega-3 - Last updated on August 17, 2023

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