

# Omega-3 Fatty Acids and Pregnancy

Omega-3 fatty acids are good fats that are important to your health.





The body does not produce this type of fat, so it's important for you to eat an omega-3-rich diet.

## Benefits

### **For pregnant women, omega-3 fats:**

- Help maintain heart health
- Reduce the risk of a number of diseases
- Reduce the risk of premature delivery

### **For babies, omega-3 fats:**

- Contribute to healthy brain, nerve and eye development

## Sources of omega-3 fats

The best sources of omega-3 fats are fatty fish, nuts and certain oils and seeds.

**Fish:** To obtain the amount of omega-3 fats that you need, it's recommended to eat at least 150 grams (5 ounces) of cooked fish per week, preferably fatty fish.

**CAUTION!** Pregnant women must be cautious about the mercury found in fish. Exposure to even small amounts of mercury can cause serious health problems and pose a risk to healthy fetal or infant development. Consumption of fish containing mercury must therefore be limited.

### The fish and seafood below have a low mercury content and contain Omega-3s:

- Anchovy
- Arctic char
- Atlantic mackerel
- Canned light tuna
- Capelin
- Clams
- Crab
- Hake
- Herring
- Lake whitefish
- Mullet
- Mussels
- Oysters
- Pollock
- Rainbow trout
- Salmon
- Smelt
- Shrimp

### The following types of fish should be eaten in moderation due to their higher levels of mercury:

No more than 300 g (2 cups) per week of:

- Canned white tuna (albacore)

No more than 150 g (1 cup) per month of

- Fresh or frozen tuna
- Marlin
- Orange roughy
- Shark
- Snoek
- Swordfish



**CAUTION!** DO NOT EAT fish caught in New Brunswick's lakes or rivers because they may contain too much **mercury**.

## **Oils, nuts, seeds, and other food products**

- Canola oil, flaxseed oil, soybean oil and walnut oil
- Margarine made from canola or soybean oil
- Walnuts, pecans
- Chia seeds and ground flaxseed
- Tofu, omega-3-fortified soy beverages, soy butter and soybean seeds (edamame)
- Omega-3-enriched yogurt
- Omega-3-enriched eggs.



## Tips to boost omega-3 fats in your diet:

- Eat two or more meals of fish or seafood every week;
- Make sandwiches or salads with canned salmon;
- Add lemon, herbs or spices to enhance the flavour of fish;
- Add ground flaxseed to yogurt, cereal, muffins and salads;
- Snack on nuts or seeds;
- Use canola or soybean oil in your recipes and for cooking;
- Replace regular eggs with omega-3 eggs;
- Drink omega-3-fortified soy beverages.



**IMPORTANT :** Avoid consuming more than 4 to 6 tablespoons (60 to 90 ml) of ground flaxseed and no more than 2 tablespoons (30 ml) of flaxseed oil per day.

A pregnant woman is shown from the waist up, wearing a grey t-shirt. She is holding a clear glass of water in her left hand and a small white pill in her right hand. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting. The top of the page features a purple curved banner with a silhouette of a plant.

## The scoop on omega-3 supplements:

- It remains to be proven whether omega-3 fatty supplements (fish oil and enriched supplements) benefit unborn babies. Therefore, for the health of your baby, you should eat fatty fish, nuts, seeds and oils.
- If you still choose to buy a supplement, check the label to make sure it has a natural product number (NPN), which indicates that it is government-approved for safety.
- If you already supplement your diet with a daily multivitamin, you should not take cod liver oil because you will get too much vitamin A.
- Talk to your doctor before taking an omega-3 supplement.

For more information, visit [Mercury in Fish](#) on the **Government of New Brunswick** website