

Omega-3 Fats Is Where it's At

By: Natalie Murphy, RD

When it comes to food and nutrition, it's hard to sort through the multitude of messages we hear daily. "Eat more of this", "eat less of that", "if you eat fat you will get fat", "carbohydrates are evil"...you get the point. The irony is that if you explore many "rumors" the media spreads, you'll find that something has gotten lost in translation. This is just the case when it comes to fat in the foods we eat.

For years fat has been touted as the poor misunderstood stepchild in the world of nutrition. Despite the wonderful flavors and creamy textures it provides, it's still viewed by the media as a nutrition "no-no". It's true that fat is high in calories and that eating more calories than you burn can add to your waistline, but a moderate amount of fat is *good* for you – especially omega-3 fats.

Omega-3's are all the buzz lately. These nutrition power-houses are called "essential" fatty acids because our body cannot make them on its own; we have to get omega-3's from the foods we eat. If one word could describe why omega-3 fats have received so much attention, it would be "inflammation". Nutrition research has determined that omega-3's reduce inflammation in the body. Additionally, they lower triglycerides, prevent the formation of blood clots and stabilize heart cells preventing abnormal heart beat rhythm. All good things when you consider that heart disease as the number one killer in the U.S.

Many of you may be thinking, "I'm young and I don't have to worry about eating well yet". Well, think again. The air we breathe and the demands we put on our bodies contribute to inflammation in our bodies. A certain amount of inflammation is necessary for the body to start the healing process for injury and illness, but a constant state of chronic inflammation can allow disease to creep in. Debilitating illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer are linked in part to various types of inflammation. These diseases take several years to develop; small steps each day can manage or even keep these dreaded illnesses at bay. The foods you choose can tip the scale toward health and away from disease..

Certain foods can increase or decrease the risk of inflammation. Inflammation is an underlying factor for the diseases listed above. Saturated fats found in animal products and omega-6 polyunsaturated fats found in corn oil, cottonseed oil, safflower oil, sunflower oil promote inflammation. Omega-3 fats decrease inflammation. Eliminating all saturated fats and polyunsaturated omega-6's from your day isn't necessary, but making some skillful substitutions to include omega-3 fats may allow you to tip the inflammation cascade in your favor.

Tuning in to the types of fat you eat can allow you to take action today. The Organic Dish cares about you and the health of your family. Beneficial omega-3 fats are featured on this month's menu in the mouth watering Salmon with Chili Corn Salsa.

Omega-3 fats are most commonly found in:

- salmon
- trout
- tuna
- herring
- mackerel
- canola oil
- flaxseed
- flaxseed oil
- soy oil
- walnuts

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