



OMEGA 3 FISH OIL SUPPLEMENTS: THEY SHOULD BE ON PRESCRIPTION

For several years, it has become more apparent that the supplementation of Omega 3 fish oil to patients confers health benefits. In recent years, a number of benefits have been shown, including reduction of triglyceride cholesterol (50%), heart attack (50%), stroke (50%) and overall mortality (20%).

Other benefits/reductions are:

- breast and bowel cancer growth and spread
- Alzheimer's disease/memory and cognition
- child intelligence
- Parkinson's disease
- multiple sclerosis
- depression/suicidal behaviour
- bipolar disease
- immunity
- allergy/hay fever/asthma
- behaviour problems/anger/hostility/impulse control
- psychosis/schizophrenia
- hypertension
- diabetes
- cardiac arrhythmia/palpitations/atrial fibrillation
- coronary heart disease/atherosclerosis/heart failure
- stroke
- osteoarthritis
- autoimmune diseases, e.g. rheumatoid arthritis
- skin diseases
- cholesterol
- macular degeneration.

Dietary imbalance

Our six-million-year-old caveman bodies no longer eat a staple of fish, plants and wild meats, so we don't consume enough Omega 3. In addition, we eat more Omega 6 via margarine, processed foods, certain plant oils, etc.

The resulting skew in the Omega 3 to 6 ratio away from optimal causes an increase in production of pro-inflammatory messengers in the body. This causes many diseases.

Most of these diseases are due to inflammation, which is why studies have found that those taking aspirin have a lower incidence of colon cancer, while elderly people taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs have reduced Alzheimer's disease, etc.

Ideally, people would eat at least two to four fish meals per week, but there are many reasons why this does not happen.

Taking Omega 3 fish oil capsules

Taking four to eight Omega 3 fish oil capsules per day can help to:

- reduce the drug bill
- reduce all the diseases noted above
- reduce hospital costs
- reduce primary care costs
- improve quality of life, enabling older people to live independently at home for longer
- keep older people working longer, and participating in the community more.

As New Zealand's population ages, enabling older people to stay healthier and more independent will give numerous benefits to the community and also limit medical costs.

Getting Omega 3 fish oil on prescription

I propose that Omega 3 fish oil is included as a prescribeable item on the pharmaceutical schedule, so New Zealanders can get it on prescription.

Non drug items that I believe are currently prescribeable are:

- Zinc
- Vitamin C
- "multi vite" – contains some Vitamin D and B vitamins
- Pyridoxine (Vitamin B6)
- Vitamin D

So, making Omega 3 fish oil prescribeable as a non-drug item would not be without precedent.