

Non-Prescription Fish Oil for High Triglycerides

Fish oil is a healthy source of omega-3 fatty acids. In high doses, fish oil can lower triglycerides levels. Triglycerides are a type of fat made by the body from extra energy (calories) and sugar. High levels can increase your risk of heart disease.

This handout **only** refers to non-prescription fish oil capsules recommended by your health provider.

Why you may Need Fish Oil Supplements

Your doctor may have told you to take fish oil because you have:

- High triglycerides (>500mg/dl)

When Fish oil is taken daily it can:

- Lower triglyceride levels by 25-50%
- Decrease the stickiness of blood cells (platelets)
- Reduces inflammation

Fish Oil Safety

Fish oil supplements are generally recognized as safe (GRAS) for use in children and adults. Some types of fish may be contaminated with mercury and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyl). When fish oil supplements are made, these are removed. Shark, king mackerel, and farm-raised salmon supplements may be contaminated.

Cod liver oil is not recommended as it is lower in omega-3 fatty acids and large doses may provide too much vitamin A. Flaxseed oil and other sources of ALA (alpha-linolenic acid) may **not** be used because they do not lower triglycerides.

Stop fish oil for one week before surgeries. Discuss this with your surgeon.

Interactions

Fish oils may interact with:

- Birth control pills
- Blood pressure medicines
- Orlistat
- Blood thinners
- Immunosuppressants (Cyclosporine, Sirolimus, and Tacrolimus)

Fish Oil Safety

You should **not** take fish oil if you have:

- Fish or seafood allergies
- Bleeding disorders

Supplement Facts

Serving Size 1 Softgel

Amount Per Softgel	% Daily Value
Calories 15	
Total Fat 1.5 g	2%**
Polyunsaturated Fat 1 g	
Cholesterol 15 mg	5%**
Total Carbohydrate less than 1 g	< 1%**
Omega-3 Concentrate from Fish Oil ^{††} 1400 mg	*
Total Omega-3 Fatty Acids ^{††} 1000 mg	*
EPA (Eicosapentaenoic Acid) Omega-3 ^{††} 683 mg	*
DHA (Docosahexaenoic Acid) Omega-3 ^{††} 252 mg	*
Other Omega-3 ^{††} 65 mg	*

*Daily Value not established.

**Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

How to Take Fish Oil

1. Ask your health provider about the right dose to take. For those with >500mg/dl of triglycerides, daily dose of 3000-4000 mg of omega 3 fatty acids (DHA+EPA) is preferred.
2. Find a fish oil supplement that is right for you. There are softgels and liquid versions. Your healthcare provider can advise you where to buy these supplements. To find a reputable supplement, look for a “third-party tested” product. Common independent testing organizations include USP, NSF, and ConsumerLab.
3. Find the “Serving Size” on the Supplement Facts panel.
4. Add the EPA + DHA to find the dose per serving. In the example, 1 softgel equals 935mg (683mg EPA + 252mg DHA). In order to meet the recommendation of 3000-4000 mg per day, you would need to take 4 of these softgels per day.
5. High-dose fish oil (>3000 mg daily) should be taken with a meal that contains fat and split between breakfast and dinner to maximize absorption and digestive comfort.

To decrease “fish burps” try to:

- Look for a “burp-less” formula.
- Store the fish oil in the fridge.
- Swallow it cold.
- Take it at night.

Who to Call

If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan.

For a list of UW Health Clinics, please visit www.uwhealth.org/.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 3/2026 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Clinical Nutrition Services Department and the Department of Nursing. HF#592