

## *Health News from 3Care Therapeutics*

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### **Taking a daily fish oil capsule can stave off mental illness in those at highest risk**

A three-month course of an omega-3 supplement appeared to be as effective as drugs, cutting the rate of psychotic illness like schizophrenia by a over 25%.

The researchers believe it is the omega-3 in fish oil - already hailed for promoting healthy hearts - that has beneficial effects in the brain. Omega-3 fatty acids are known to improve the action of neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin.

"The finding that treatment with a natural substance may prevent, or at least delay, the onset of psychotic disorder gives hope that there may be alternatives to antipsychotic drugs," the study authors said.

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Dr. Alison Cobb

Antipsychotic drugs are potent and can have serious side effects, which puts some people off taking them. These medications also come with a host of potential negative side-effects. Fish oil supplements (omega-3), on the other hand, are generally well tolerated and easy to take.

The international team from Austria, Australia and Switzerland tested the treatment in 81 people deemed to be at particularly high risk of developing psychosis.

### **A Natural choice for supporting mood and brain health**

The subject's high risk was related to a strong family history of schizophrenia, or similar disorders, or the individuals were already showing mild symptoms of these conditions themselves.

For the test, half of the individuals took fish oil supplements (1.2 grams of omega-3 fatty acids) for 12 weeks, while the other half took a placebo. Neither group knew which treatment they were receiving.

Dr Paul Amminger and his team followed the groups for a year to see how many, if any, went on to develop illness.

Two in the fish oil group developed a psychotic disorder compared to 11 in the placebo group.

Based on the results, the investigators estimate that one high-risk adult could be protected from developing psychosis for every four treated over a year.

They believe the omega-3 fatty acids found in the supplements may alter brain signalling in the brain with beneficial effects.

Alison Cobb, of the mental health charity Mind, said: "If young people can be treated successfully with fish oils, this is hugely preferable to treating them with antipsychotics, which come with a range of problems from weight gain to sexual dysfunction, whereas omega-3s are actually beneficial to their general state of health.

"These are promising results and more research is needed to show if omega-3s could be an alternative to antipsychotics in the long term."

### **US military may increase soldiers intake of omega-3 to address physical and mental stress**

A multi-million dollar omega-3 market could open up within two-to-three years if the US Department of Defense orders its troops to take EPA and DHA omega 3 fatty acids. The department is considering either supplementing or fortifying the rations of all active service personnel in order to enhance stress resilience and general wellness leading to improved military performance, to cut hospital bills and to speed recovery from traumatic brain injuries.

A spokesperson for the department said, "There are discussions at many levels about the addition of the omega-3, especially in combat-feeding and/or clinical setting, but they are discussions at this point in time."

Although the department has no official view about the benefits of omega-3s, its Dietary Supplements Committee is working with Samuelli Institute based in Alexandria, Virginia, to explore the military benefits of their use.

### **Omega-3 is "nutritional armor"**

Of particular concern for military planners are the high rates of depression and suicide together with physical/mental stress associated with combat in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The military application of omega-3s was the subject of a conference, entitled 'Nutritional armor for the warfighter: can omega-3 fatty acids enhance stress resilience, wellness, and military performance?' staged last December.

Adam Ismail, executive director of the Global Organization for EPA and DHA Omega 3s (GOED), who attended the conference stated, "I think omega-3s have a vital role to play for the US military. Fortification would be a cheap way of achieving big health care savings, improving military performance and saving lives through helping TBIs."

Omega-3s have been shown to have an impact in four of the five top areas for which soldiers receive hospital treatment: Depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, pregnancy and surgical complications, he added.

The most logical delivery form would be fortification not supplementation, said Ismail. But a US military directive prohibiting the military from providing any pharmaceutical or supplement pill via the food supply chain would have to be rescinded.

Ismail said he believed the military could fortify the rations of all active service personnel within two-to-three years but first military nutritionists want to see more scientific research to identify the contribution EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) could make.

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