

## One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish

By Jose Antonio, Ph.D.

Is there a single 'best' food that you can eat? The answer my friend can be found in the annals of research by none other than Dr. Seuss! Yes, it is fish. And the fatter the fish, the better! Fish with lots of omega-3 fats. We think you should eat fatty fish at least two times a week. Fatty fish like mackerel, lake trout, herring, sardines, albacore tuna and salmon are high in two kinds of omega-3 fatty acids, eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). Don't try to pronounce these long words that only chemistry majors can enunciate, just remember EPA and DHA. At the least, consume about 1-2 g of EPA+DHA per day, preferably from fatty fish; and if you don't like visiting the local sushi bar, take a fish oil pill. And I'd say go as high as 5 grams a day if you can.

So why the bruhaha about fish fat. Here's why. First of all, it's darn good for you. It makes you happy and is kind to your heart. In a recent study, 18 men with a history of heart attacks were randomized to placebo or omega-3 fatty acids (585 mg of docosahexaenoic acid and 225 mg of eicosapentaenoic acid) for two 4-month periods in a crossover design. Omega-3 fatty acids decreased heart rate at rest from 73 to 68 beats per minute and improved 1-minute HR recovery after exercise. (1) Good for the heart, eh!

But in another super-cool study, scientists tested the hypothesis that 6 weeks of dietary supplementation with DHA (2.0 g/day) and EPA (3.0 g/day) enhances exercise-induced increases in brachial artery (the big artery in your arm) diameter and blood flow during rhythmic exercise. In seven healthy subjects, blood pressure, heart rate and brachial artery diameter, blood flow, and conductance were assessed before and during the last 30 s of 90 s of rhythmic handgrip exercise (30% of maximal handgrip tension). This was also performed in six other healthy subjects who received 6 weeks of placebo (safflower oil). Placebo treatment had no effect on any variable. No shit. DHA and EPA supplementation enhanced contraction-induced increases in brachial artery diameter, blood flow and conductance (i.e. the 'ease' in which blood flows through your vessels).(2)

Bottom line: **Fish or fish oil pills should be taken daily. You'll get a better pump; you'll recover better from exercise; and your heart will in turn be tickin' like a smooth-running machine. You'll end up running like 'Pre'! (Okay, maybe not...but if you don't give fish a try, you'll be missing out the perhaps the single best food, period!).**

### References

1. O'Keefe JH, Jr., Abuissa H, Sastre A, Steinhaus DM, Harris WS. Effects of omega-3 fatty acids on resting heart rate, heart rate recovery after exercise, and heart rate variability in men with healed myocardial infarctions and depressed ejection fractions. *Am J Cardiol* 2006; 97: 1127-30.
2. Walser B, Giordano RM, Stebbins CL. Supplementation with omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids augments brachial artery dilation and blood flow during forearm contraction. *Eur J Appl Physiol* 2006.