

HEALTH BENEFITS OF OMEGA-3s RECOGNISED New Nutrient Reference Values for Long Chain Omega-3s

The Australian and NZ governments have launched a new publication *Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand including Recommended Dietary Intakes*¹ indicating revised and additional recommendations for essential nutrients including protein, vitamins and minerals and, for the first time, dietary fibre and fatty acids.

- This will guide government, regulators, doctors, dietitians and other health professionals in advising on nutrient intakes and dietary recommendations.
- Most people are familiar with RDIs (Recommended Dietary Intakes) from food labels. The food regulatory agency, Food Standards Australia New Zealand, will use the new Nutrient Reference Values to revise on-pack RDIs over the next few months.
- The fatty acids included are linoleic acid (Omega-6), alpha-linolenic acid (shorter chain Omega-3) and DHA, EPA and DPA (long chain Omega-3s).
- Three sets of recommendations are made for long chain Omega-3s:
 1. **Adequate intake** (AI) levels based on current median intakes – these are levels considered sufficient to prevent deficiency
 2. **Upper Level of Intakes** (UL) which provide guidance on safe upper levels of intake
 3. **Suggested Dietary Targets** (SDT) which are recommended intakes to reduce the risk of chronic disease
- The **Suggested Dietary Targets** for long chain Omega-3s are equivalent to the 90th centile of intake in the Australian/New Zealand population. Most people consume far less than the recommended target intakes.
- It is recommended that these intakes are attained by replacing energy dense, low nutrient foods with long chain Omega-3-rich foods such as:
 1. Fish (eg, tuna, salmon, mackerel)
 2. Lean beef
 3. Low energy density long chain Omega-3 enriched foods (eg, milk, bread, yoghurt)
- The recommendations for the long chain Omega-3s are:

Age/gender group		Long chain Omega-3 (DHA/EPA/DPA) mg/day		
		Adequate Intake (AI)	Upper Level of Intake (UL)	Suggested Dietary Target (SDT)
Infants **	0-6 mo.	-	Not possible to set	
	7-12 mo.	-	Not possible to set	
Children	1-3 years	40	3000	
	4-8 years	55	3000	
Boys	9-13 years	70	3000	
	14-18 years	125	3000	
Girls	9-13 years	70	3000	
	14-18 years	85	3000	
Men	19-30 years	160	3000	610
	31-50 years	160	3000	
	51-70 years	160	3000	
	>70 years	160	3000	
Women	19-30 years	90	3000	430
	31-50 years	90	3000	
	51-70 years	90	3000	
	>70 years	90	3000	
Pregnant	14-18 years	110	3000	
	19-30 years	115	3000	
	31-50 years	115	3000	
Lactating	14-18 years	140	3000	
	19-30 years	145	3000	
	31-50 years	145	3000	

1. NHMRC. Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand. Commonwealth of Australia, 2006.

For more information on the new Nutrient Reference Values see
<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/n35syn.htm>

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