



## Fish Oil



Fish oil is high in omega-3 fatty acids called EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid). Research has shown fish oil benefits several health problems in pets.

ALA (alpha-linolenic acid) is another omega-3 fatty acid found in vegetable oils. Flaxseed has the highest amount of it. Humans can convert ALA into DHA and EPA. Dogs and cats, however, can't do this well, so you must give fish oil to get the benefits.

### Benefits

Some of the benefits of fish oil include:

- Anti-inflammatory effects
- Improving heart function
- Reducing high blood pressure
- Better immune system
- Helping kidney disease
- Improving arthritis
- Helping with cancer
- Improving some GI (stomach & intestines) diseases
- Helping allergies and itchy skin
- Controlling high triglycerides

### Dose

Different conditions require different doses for fish oil to be effective. People may think fish oil doesn't help, but it may be because the dose wasn't high enough. The dose is also important because too high of a dose can actually suppress the immune system. Fish oil isn't helping at that point and is potentially causing harm.

### Research in Dogs

These are studies that have been done in dogs testing the effectiveness of fish oil:

- Improvement in the amount of itchiness in dogs with skin problems
- Dogs with heart problems were less likely to have atrial fibrillation and arrhythmias (irregular heart beats)
- Dogs with heart problems ate better while taking fish oil and were less likely to lose weight
- Dogs with kidney disease were less likely to have high blood pressure and had less protein in their urine (protein indicates the kidneys aren't working properly)
- Blood values were better in dogs with kidney disease
- Dogs with arthritis improved
- Lowered high triglycerides in dogs with excessive levels
- Improved survival times for dogs with lymphoma and has been shown to benefit other cancers



Although there haven't been as many studies in cats, cats appear to respond as dogs do. Therefore, fish oil can be an important supplement for them as well.

### **Products**

Cod liver oil can be used, however you need to be cautious. It has lower amounts of omega-3 fatty acids than other fish oil and has vitamin A and D in it. The vitamins may be in larger amounts than your pet needs. It's generally safer to use fish oil.

Krill oil can be given though it is generally more expensive and hasn't been shown to be any better. All research studies have been done with fish oil.

Most dogs like the taste of fish oil and will readily eat it. Cats, on the other hand, often won't. Start with a very small amount, preferably mixed in wet food. If your cat will eat that, try adding a little more each day. If your cat won't eat the full dose, it's still beneficial to give a small amount.

### **Cautions**

Fish oil can lower vitamin E levels. Many fish oil products contain vitamin E to counteract that. It also acts as a preservative.

If your cat is hyperthyroid and you are feeding a prescription low iodine diet, be careful with fish oil. Make sure the fish oil you have doesn't have more than 1.5ug iodine per 1000mg fish oil (you may need to call the company to find out).

### **Summary**

Much research has been done on fish oil in pets, and it has been shown to be a great addition for treating many conditions. Because of its benefits to the immune system, it is a good supplement for all pets.

Unfortunately, some conditions may not respond as well if you try to treat them in later stages. Early treatment, even before the condition is known, is ideal.

