

# How to Balance Omega 3 6 9 Fatty Acids

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<https://draxe.com/nutrition/how-to-balance-omega-3-6-9-fatty-acids/>



When it comes to omega fatty acids in our diets, we often hear about the many [health benefits of omega-3s](#). Less attention is given to health perks associated with other important fatty acids, namely omega-6s and [omega-9s](#). All three of these fatty acids — omega 3 6 9 — have a role to play in maintaining homeostasis (or balance when it comes to your health), but what’s tricky about getting these fats from food sources is that the ratio we obtain is very important.

People eating a “typical Western diet” tend to get lots of [omega-6](#) polyunsaturated fatty acids from their diets, especially in the form of arachidonic acid. Omega-6 fatty acids are precursors to a number of potent pro-inflammatory mediators. That means getting too much can pose the risk for a number of symptoms and diseases. At the same time, many people are deficient in anti-inflammatory omega-3s, essential fatty acids that promote heart health and need to be obtained from the diet.

Below we look at both the similarities and differences between different omega fats, as well as the best way to balance your intake of omega 3 6 9 in order to keep inflammation in check.

## What Are Omega Fatty Acids?

Fats (fatty acids) in general are essential parts of any healthy diet and critical for many bodily functions. For example, we need fats in our diets to support neurological health, hormone

production and reproduction, balance cholesterol levels, to aid in satiety and control our appetites, and much more.

We get two main types of fatty acids from our diets: [saturated fats](#) and unsaturated fats. Chemically, all fats are fatty acid chains that consist of linked carbon and hydrogen atoms. What determines if a fat is saturated or unsaturated is the number of linked carbon atoms. Unsaturated fatty acids include the types called monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFAs) and [polyunsaturated fatty acids](#) (PUFAs). [Omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids are PUFAS](#), while omega-9s are MUFAS.

If you live in an industrialized country, you likely get plenty of omega-6s but lack omega-3s (especially EPA and DHA). Because many Westerners don't eat fish regularly, [fish oil supplements](#) that supply omega-3s (like krill or cod liver oil supplements) are [now one of the most popular supplement categories worldwide](#).

## Omega 3 6 9 Similarities

Something that makes omega 3 6 and 9 similar is that [we need all three in our diets for optimal health](#).

**What are the benefits of omega 3 6 & 9? Each of these fatty acids has its own functions and health benefits.**

Omega-3s are linked to [anti-inflammatory effects](#), heart health, mood regulation, fetal development and more. Omega-3s are most abundant in seafood, especially fish like salmon and mackerel, and some nuts and seeds, like walnuts and flaxseed. There are three main types of omega-3: eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), and alpha-linolenic acid (ALA). EPA and [DHA](#) are mostly found in fatty fish, while ALA is found in nuts and seeds.

Omega-6s have earned a somewhat bad reputation for promoting inflammation, but they do offer certain health benefits (such as for [cardiovascular health](#)) and also supply the body with a form of energy. We need omega-6s to stay healthy, however we don't need the high amounts that are typical today (and are often obtained from processed foods). The two main types of omega-6s are arachidonic acid and [linoleic acid](#). Omega-6s are converted to a number of other fatty acids, such as dihomo-gamma-linolenic acid (DGLA) and [conjugated linoleic acid](#) (CLA). These fatty acids have been shown to be protective against conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, nerve pain, breast cancer, obesity and heart disease. Omega-6s are found in the highest quantities in vegetable oils, nuts and seeds — and to a lesser extent meat and eggs.

The most common omega-9 is [oleic acid](#), which is also the most common monounsaturated fatty acid in many people's diets. Omega-9s are found in foods like canola oil, olive oil, olives and almonds. Studies suggest that consuming moderate to high levels of omega-9s from foods high in [monounsaturated fats](#) can help to reduce triglycerides, hypertension and "bad" LDL cholesterol levels. Research also show omega-9 helps [improve insulin sensitivity](#) and [decrease diabetes risk](#), inflammation, [obesity](#), and risk for stroke or heart disease. Omega-9s can also be used in combination with omega-3s to potentially help [control nerve pain](#), anxiety and other symptoms.

# Omega 3 6 9 Differences

Omega-3s and omega-6s are PUFAS and considered “[essential fatty acids](#)” because you need to obtain them through food. Omega-9s are usually monounsaturated and considered “nonessential fatty acids” because the body can make some on its own.

- Is too much omega-6 bad for you? Due to the [inflammatory nature of omega-6s](#), an imbalance of omega-6s to omega-3s in your diet can contribute to a number of chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity, arthritis and others. The body uses omega-6s to make pro-inflammatory compounds, including eicosanoids, prostaglandins and leukotrienes, which the immune system uses to increase inflammation in response to disease or injury. Inflammation is considered a normal process that can help the human body defend itself and heal. The problem, however, is that excessive/chronic inflammation can lead to tissue damage and many illnesses.
- On the other hand, omega-3s are considered anti-inflammatory fats. This is why they have been shown to [support cardiovascular health](#), help increase “good” HDL cholesterol, prevent high triglycerides, reduce symptoms of depression and psychotic disorders, support fetal/infant brain development, help retain/improve memory in older people, and protect against other symptoms tied to chronic inflammation.

## Foods that Contain Omega Fats

What foods are high in omega 3 6 9? Below is a list of the top omega foods to include in your diet regularly, including a mix of seafood, eggs, nuts, seeds and oils:

### Top [Omega-3 Foods](#):

- Atlantic mackerel
- Alaskan salmon (and salmon fish oil)
- Cod liver oil
- Walnuts
- Chia seeds
- Herring
- Flaxseeds
- Albacore tuna
- White fish
- Sardines
- Hemp seeds
- Anchovies
- Natto
- Egg yolks (ideally organic, free-range)
- Certain oils also contain omega-3s to some degree, usually in the form of ALAs, such as mustard oil, walnut oil and hemp oil
- Butternuts, Brazil nuts, cashews, hemp seeds and hazelnuts also have omega-3s in the form of ALA, but walnuts/chia/flax are the best sources
- To a lesser extent, some omega-3s can also be found in vegetables and grass-fed meat

### Top Omega-6 Foods:

- Refined vegetable oils (oils used for cooking including soybean, safflower, grapeseed, sunflower, corn, cottonseed, sesame, peanut and walnut oils)
- Nuts and seeds, including walnuts, almonds, cashews, sunflower seeds and nut butters
- Mayonnaise and salad dressings (made with vegetable oils) also contribute omega-6s to many people's diets
- Meat, poultry, dairy products and eggs (opt for organic, unprocessed and non-GMO whole foods whenever possible to maximize the potential omega 6 benefits)

### Omega-9 Foods:

- Vegetable and seed oils, including [canola oil](#), cashew oil, almond oil, sunflower oil, avocado oil and peanut oil
- Olive oil and olives
- Nuts and seeds, including almonds, cashews and walnuts
- [Avocado](#)

**One thing to note about omega 3 6 9 foods: Many foods contain more than one of these fatty acids.** When you eat a certain food — for example, olives or nuts — you're typically going to eat more than one type of fat. Nature is not that simple, and basically all foods that contain fat have a mix of different fatty acids. For example, do eggs have omega-6? Yes, eggs contain omega-6s and some omega-3s too.

## How to Balance Omega 3 6 9 Ratio

What is the ideal ratio of omega-3 to omega-6? Overall, we know that the interaction of different omega fats and their mediators is complex. The numbers may vary, but many experts recommend an [ideal ratio of omega-6 foods to omega-3 foods in the diet](#) that is about equal to, or at least at, a ratio of 4:1 to 2:1. This means you should obtain between twice as many to four times as many omega-6s as omega-3s.

This might seem like a lot of omega-6s, but it's actually far less than many people currently get — due to high intake of foods like modified cooking oils, such as canola, sunflower and safflower oil, plus some nuts. Some health authorities estimate that many Westerners may get as much as [14 to 25 times more omega-6 than omega-3s from their diets!](#)

The best way to get enough omega fats, in a healthy ratio, is to consume at least two servings of fatty fish per week to meet your omega-3 needs, along with a variety of whole foods like nuts, seeds, quality oils like olive oil, eggs and grass-fed meat.

A simple step you can take to balance your intake of these fats is to replace refined vegetable oils (high in omega-6s) with olive oil, avocado oil, or other fats like coconut oil or grass-fed butter. Read ingredient labels on products, such as salad dressings, mayonnaise, frozen foods, prepackaged meats, fried foods, etc., in order to avoid or limit omega-6 intake by limiting your consumption of refined vegetable oils.

Should you supplement to meet your needs? If you do not eat fish regularly, then you can increase omega-3s in your diet with a quality supplement (more on supplementing below).

## Supplements and Dosage

What's the ideal omega 3 6 9 ratio? The amount of omega 3 6 9 fatty acids that you need each day depends on a number of different factors, including your health status, age and diet.

Here's what you need to know in terms of recommendations for omega 3 6 9 dosages per day:

- Through a combination of both food sources and supplements, aim to get at least 500 to 1,000 milligrams per day of combined EPA/DHA. This is a general recommendation, however higher intake of about 4,000 to 5,000 milligrams of total omega-3s (ALA/EPA/DHA combined) has also been found to be beneficial for most people.
- Taking higher amounts of omega-3s, up to 5,000 milligrams daily, has been shown to be safe with minimal risk of adverse side effects. However, if you have a bleeding disorder, bruise easily, take blood-thinning medications or have diabetes, talk to your doctor about the amount of omega-3s you should consume, especially from fish oil supplements, since omega-3s can interact with medications you may take.
- When it comes to omega-6 intake, the [Food and Nutrition Board of the U.S. Institute of Medicine](#) states that 17 grams for men and 12 grams for women are adequate.
- There is no standard recommendation for omega-9 intake, since this is not an "essential fatty acid."

Many people already get more than enough omega-6s from their diets, therefore supplementing is not recommended in most cases. Because omega-9s are nonessential (the body can make these fats on its own), it's also not usually necessary to supplement with extra omega-9s.

However, because dosage recommendations for omega fats can be confusing, some people choose to take a combined omega 3 6 9 supplement. A quality supplement provides all three fatty acids in a healthy ratio/proportion, somewhere between 4:1:1 and 2:1:1 for omega 3 6 9. If you do choose to take an omega 3 6 9 supplement, it's best to choose one that contains antioxidants (such as vitamin E) and is cold-pressed to reduce the risk for oxidization and heat damage.

## Risks and Side Effects

What are the side effects of omega 3 6 9? Each of these fatty acids is capable of causing side effects if taken in large amounts, especially in supplement form. Omega 3 6 9 side effects can include:

- an increase in inflammatory conditions, such as joint pain
- eczema
- nausea
- diarrhea
- belching
- fishy breath

Note that the omega fatty acids found in whole foods are unlikely to cause the same negative symptoms as supplements or [processed foods](#).

Here's something else to keep in mind when it comes to fish oil supplements (which provide omega-3s): Many products contain harmful contaminants, such as mercury and heavy metals. It's important to purchase fish oil supplements from a reputable source that tests for contaminants and indicates a level of purity.

**Reference :**

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