

MEDIA RELEASE

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FISH OIL SUPPLEMENTS: DO YOU NEED THEM — AND CAN YOU TRUST THEM?

There is so much contradictory advice about fish oil in the media. How can people tell which fish oil supplements to trust - or even whether they should be taken at all? Alison Quesnel from umbrella group Natural Products NZ explains.

Many consumers are understandably confused about the flip-flop stance that news media articles take on whether or not high Omega 3 fish oil supplements are good for heart, joint and brain health.

While the best approach is to read every new research paper and judge its worth for yourself, few people have the time or research interpretation skills to do this. So, what should consumers do?

The first step is to decide whether or not you need to take fish oil supplements at all. Where possible, it is always best to meet one's nutritional needs through a healthy, balanced diet and lifestyle. If you consume plenty of fish (at least once or twice a week), leafy green vegetables, nuts (particularly walnuts), flax seeds, flaxseed oil and vegetable oils (e.g. safflower, sunflower, corn or soy) then you may already be getting all of the Omega 3 that you need.

If your diet is lacking in these foods then fish oil supplements may be of benefit. Natural Products NZ strongly encourages people to seek a qualified health practitioner's advice before taking fish oil or any dietary supplement so as to ensure that the right kind of product and dosage is being taken for that person's needs. In some cases the advice could be that there is no need to take anything at all.

Be sure to let the health practitioner know about any other type of dietary supplement, natural remedy or pharmaceutical medicine that you are currently taking. This is because some dietary supplements can react with other supplements, medicines or conditions.

If you do decide to start taking fish oil (or any other type of dietary supplement) then take the right dose at the right time. It is vital to follow the instructions on the label and never exceed the stated dose unless your healthcare professional advises otherwise. Remember, more does not always equal better!

More.../2

Fish oil / 2

If you are taking fish oil or other dietary supplements then be wary of sensationalist and negative (or positive) media reports that contradict your healthcare professionals' advice. Always check with them before starting, changing or stopping taking any dietary supplement, natural remedy or medication.

Consumers also face a challenge in knowing which products they can trust. The best advice is to buy products from a reputable pharmacy, health food store or supermarket and be particularly wary of buying goods from overseas-based websites.

Shop on quality rather than price, and always buy a reputable brand. This is because New Zealand's leading supplements manufacturers base their products on comprehensive research and, where possible, clinical trials. When purchasing a recognised brand, you can be confident that the products are safe and what is stated on the label is actually contained in the bottle.

If you are unsure about which brands are reputable, and which are not, then buy products from companies that belong to Natural Products NZ. All of our members sign up to a Code of Conduct that promotes personal integrity, ethical corporate behaviour and holding consumer safety paramount.

A list of all NPNZ members can be found on our website: www.naturalproductsnz.org/members

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Natural Products New Zealand (NPNZ) is a national industry organisation representing this country's natural products, functional foods, complementary medicines, cosmeceuticals and nutraceuticals industries within New Zealand and internationally.

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