

# What's in Your Fish/Krill Oil?

By Gregory A. Hood, MD, MACP

There are a number of benefits to omega-3 fatty acids. Some benefits are strongly proven, while others are anecdotal or conjectural. When used in prescription strength, omega-3's can treat issues of high triglycerides and low HDL, "good", cholesterol. They can reduce the risk of pancreatitis in some cases as well. There have been specific cases in which omega-3's have been helpful in keeping diseased arteries and/or hemodialysis grafts from clotting closed. There may be benefits to the brain, heart, joints, the skin and other body systems, although the data on these uses isn't conclusively proven.

According to the *New York Times*,

"fish oil products generated about \$1.2 billion in sales in the United States last year, making them among the most popular dietary supplements on the market. But like most supplements, they are largely unregulated. Companies do not have to register their products with the Food and Drug Administration or provide proof that the capsules and liquids they sell contain the ingredients on their labels and the doses advertised."

The problem is that most of the capsules sold frankly do not pass muster when it comes to content or safety. Independent testing of dozens of top selling brands showed that a significant percentage of them did not contain the amount of omega-3's that their labels promise to contain. This is particularly bad news for people buying these products because the research that demonstrated heart and cholesterol benefits from omega-3's were done with prescription strength omega-3 capsules, not over the counter (OTC) doses. Prescription capsules often contain 3.5-6x the amount of omega-3's that may be claimed to be in the OTC "alternatives".

There is worse news. Unfortunately, we live in a polluted world. A significant amount of the expense that goes into the cost of prescription omega-3 capsules goes into fulfilling the requirements of a five step, federally monitored decontamination process. No OTC company is required to submit to federal supervision. Most OTC companies claim, at the most, to go through a two step process. In the same research every OTC product tested was found to have measureable amounts of mercury, 10% of those tested had more than 50% of the "allowable" mercury content per serving.

Our experience at Drs. Borders, Hood, and Associates over recent years corroborates these findings. In the past, we have had patients' blood tests show that toxic levels of mercury and a number of other patients have been found to have near-toxic levels of arsenic, another unfortunately common element in sea water and over the counter omega-3 sources. When this informational handout was originally created it mentioned three OTC brands that had tested the "best" marks for purity among OTCs. We have monitored them but have seen significant increases in contaminants within patients' blood samples only a

year or two later, from one of these three companies in particular, showing that the “best” can not be depended upon to maintain independent quality controls over time.

It is also important to not fall for the hype about “krill oil”. Neither fish nor krill actually make omega-3 “fish oil”. The two medicinal oils, docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), are made by plankton. The krill and the fish eat the plankton, thereby acquiring the omega-3 from their diets. Consequently, there are no established benefits unique to krill oil. The benefits of regular dietary fish consumption run the same risks of contamination. That is why the Environmental Protection Agency (another EPA) does not recommend that Americans eat more than two servings of fatty fish per week. Mercury, arsenic and other contaminants simply accumulate too quickly if this restriction isn’t respected and observed.

If it has been medically recommended to you to take prescription strength omega-3’s it is essential to understand that no over the counter product has been proven to be a suitable or safe substitute. Sometimes the level of triglycerides in the blood can be monitored to show the effectiveness of one omega-3 product as compared to another. However, to date, no over the counter product has been found to do anywhere as well as prescription strength Omega 3’s at lowering triglycerides. Fortunately, there is now a generic prescription available as a substitute for prescription strength Lovaza. This may give you some savings, or your insurance company may be more willing to cover this prescription.

As another alternative, we have made arrangements with a company, Pharmanex/NuSkin, that will deliver their product to your door, and have made assurances as to the freshness as well as the processes they undertake to cleanse their product with a quality guarantee.

**One** capsule of Lovaza contains 900mg of Omega-3-Fatty Acids, (465 EPA, 375 DHA). Supplement dosing is one capsule a day. Prescription dosing is four capsules a day.

**Two** capsules of Pharmanex Optimum Omega contain 600 mg of Omega-3-FA (300 EPA, 200 DHA, 100 other). Cost \$17/60 = \$0.57/serving. Attempting to dose this, or any OTC omega-3 product, in a dose to equate to prescription Lovaza dosing isn’t recommended.

Pharmanex log-in instructions:

Go to: [www.nuskin.com](http://www.nuskin.com)

Select your region: under NORTH AMERICA select United States

Looking at top bar(black), select READY TO SIGN UP

Select CREATE CUSTOMER ACCOUNT

Fill out Personal information

Under sponsor information enter US00233806 for sponsor distributor information

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/22/whats-in-your-fish-oil-supplements/? r=0>

<https://labdoor.com/rankings/fish-oil>