

Omega 3 and Prostate Risk

The conclusions drawn from this study on Omega 3 supplementation published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute have limitations due to the study design.

This is not a randomised controlled trial but a trial comparing Omega 3 levels in men with prostate cancer with healthy men. The men with prostate cancer had higher levels of Omega 3. But you cannot extrapolate cause and effect from this finding. It is like saying that if the majority of men with prostate cancer played tennis compared to healthy controls then tennis could trigger prostate cancer.

Also it is not clear whether the men who were already diagnosed with prostate cancer before they entered the study started taking Omega 3 supplements or eating more oily fish because of the previous research showing that Omega 3 could have a protective effect on prostate cancer (American Association for Cancer Research (2009, March 25). Omega-3 Fatty Acids Reduce Risk Of Advanced Prostate Cancer).

There is a wealth of evidence on the benefits of Omega 3 and one of the most staggering pieces of information came out in 2009 from the Harvard School of Public Health, where they stated that Omega 3 deficient diets cause up to 96,000 preventable deaths a year in the US (*The Preventable Causes of Death in the United States: Comparative Risk Assessment of Dietary, Lifestyle, and Metabolic Risk Factors* stud, April 2009, PLoS Medicine). The researchers estimated the number of deaths resulting from 12 preventable causes and Omega 3 deficiency ranked as the sixth highest killer of Americans. A deficiency in these fats was classed as a bigger killer than high intake of trans fats.

Also there are many cultures such as the Japanese who eat high amounts of oily fish containing Omega 3 fatty acids and yet have one of the lowest prostate cancer death rates in the world.

Of course, the quality of Omega 3 fish oil supplements is important. With fish oils, don't just look at the amount of fish oil which might say 1,000mg. The most important piece of information is the amount of EPA and DHA that the supplement contains which may be on the back of the label. You are aiming for 770mg EPA and 510mg DHA per day. The fish oil should be from natural deep sea fish, not farmed fish and each batch screened for contaminants e.g. Dioxins, PCBs and heavy metals like mercury and cadmium.

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