

# Nutrition Nibbles

Break through common nutrition myths, see what's trending, catch up on latest research, and get great tips from our team of Registered Dietitians.

**MYTH**

*Fish is too expensive to include in my diet.*

**FACT**

Fish can be a budget-friendly choice. Frozen fish can be less expensive compared to fresh, and white fish are often a better value. Smoked fish can also be less expensive, but should be included less often due to its high sodium content. Canned fish is another good option; choose fish packed in water instead of oil, and read the label to be sure to choose a lower-sodium product.



## Fish and omega 3 fats

### I don't eat fish because it has mercury.

Most seafood contains some mercury; however, certain types of fish should be avoided or limited due to their mercury content. Pregnant and breastfeeding women, women who may become pregnant, and children, are especially vulnerable to mercury exposure. Higher mercury levels are generally found in large, predatory fish. Mercury accumulates in their flesh as a result of eating plants, other organisms, and fish that contain mercury.

[Mercury in Fish](#)

For more information about mercury in fish, including a list of safe choices, visit:

[A Guide to Eating Fish for Women, Children and Families](#)

### Fishing isn't good for the environment.

Sustainable fish and seafood are caught or farmed in a way that does not harm the marine environment or other fish, and includes species that are not overfished. In Canada, there are several non-governmental organizations that assess and/or promote sustainable seafood:

- Ocean Wise is a seafood ranking program that lists choices as either sustainable or not recommended. It uses science-based criteria to evaluate a seafood's environmental impact. [Seafood Recommendations.](#)
- The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is an eco-certification program for wild-caught fish. The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) is an eco-certification program for farmed seafood. Criteria to assess a seafood's sustainability are created internally, or through an external multi-stakeholder process. Third-party groups assess and audit the fisheries against these standards. [Marine Stewardship Council.](#)
- SeaChoice is an organization focused on increasing consumer awareness and developing materials on seafood sustainability. It works with ranking programs by peer-reviewing assessments and contributing to methodology reviews. It assists the MSC and ASC by participating in standard advisory committees, participating in standard development consultations, and taking part in fishery and farm audits.

[Eco-Certifications, Rankings and Claims](#)

[Sustainable Fish and Seafood](#)

To make a sustainable seafood choice, look for eco-labels at grocery stores and on restaurant menus.



## Omega 3 food sources and recommendations

Omega 3 is a polyunsaturated fat. There are 3 main types of omega 3: alpha linolenic acid (ALA), docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA). The main sources of ALA are: ground flax, walnuts, vegetable oils such as canola and olive oil, and some fortified foods such as omega 3 fortified eggs. The main sources of DHA and EPA are: fatty fish such as salmon and mackerel, as well as algae oil. The body is able to produce small amounts of DHA and EPA from ALA, but dietary sources are still needed.

In Canada, the adequate intake for ALA ranges from 0.5g/day to 1.6g/day depending on age and gender. Currently, there are no recommendations for DHA and EPA. Healthy eating guidelines advise Canadians to include 2 servings of fatty fish per week, which would provide about 0.3g to 0.45g of DHA and EPA each day. Most people are well below the recommended intake levels for omega 3.

[Food Sources of Omega-3 Fats](#)

Omega 3 is important during pregnancy and lactation for fetal and infant development of the nervous system, as well as for brain health and eye health. The National Institutes of Health recommends 300mg DHA/day during pregnancy and lactation. The maximum intake is 3000mg/day of combined DHA and EPA from supplements.

[DHA/EPA and the Omega-3 Nutrition Gap / Recommended Intakes](#)

### Do I need an omega 3 supplement?



Recently, the American Heart Association advised that omega 3 supplements may be beneficial for those with heart failure or who have suffered a heart attack, but there isn't enough evidence for the routine use of omega 3 supplements by the general public. A recent Cochrane review concluded that omega 3 supplements are probably not useful for preventing or treating heart and circulatory diseases. When possible, include omega 3 from foods (especially fatty fish), and consider an omega 3 supplement if you are not able to get enough from your diet.

[Omega-3 Polyunsaturated Fatty Acid \(Fish Oil\) Supplementation and the Prevention of Clinical Cardiovascular Disease](#)

[Omega-3 fatty acids for the primary and secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease](#)

### What should I look for when choosing a supplement?

Choose a supplement that includes an antioxidant (such as vitamin E). The amount of DHA and EPA will vary depending on the product. Look for a supplement that provides at least 300mg of combined DHA and EPA per capsule. Supplements made from fish and algae oil typically have higher amounts of DHA and EPA; liquid fish oils may contain more DHA and EPA compared to capsules.

[Do I need a fish oil supplement?](#)

### What if I don't like fish?

Try freezing the supplements, or taking them at the start of the meal, to minimize the aftertaste. Supplements made from krill may be less likely to cause fishy burps, but may contain less DHA and EPA. DHA supplements made from algae oil are available for people who are allergic to fish, and who are vegetarian or vegan.

[Don't like fish? Follow these tips to navigate the omega-3 supplement aisle.](#)



### Should I take an omega 3-6-9 supplement?

Omega 3 and omega 6 are essential fatty acids which need to be obtained from the diet, whereas the body is able to manufacture omega 9 fatty acids. Most people do not get enough omega 3, and get too much omega 6. Since omega 6 is abundant in the diet, and our body is able to produce omega 9, it is best to focus on omega 3.

[Omega-3-6-9 Fatty Acids: A Complete Review](#)

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*Talk to your Registered Dietitian for more information*

# Recipe of the Month

## Flax muffins with cranberries and walnuts ([chatelaine.com](http://chatelaine.com))

Makes 12 muffins

### Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups (375mL) ground flaxseed
- ½ cup (125mL) whole wheat flour
- ½ cup (125mL) all-purpose flour
- ½ cup (125mL) brown sugar
- 4 tsp (20mL) baking powder
- ½ tsp (2.5mL) salt
- 1 ½ cups (375mL) milk
- 2 tbsp (30mL) olive oil
- 1 egg
- ½ tsp (2.5mL) vanilla
- ½ cup (125mL) dried cranberries
- ¾ cup (175mL) chopped walnuts



### Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 F (180 C). Line muffin pan with paperliners.
2. In a large bowl, using a fork, stir together flaxseed, whole wheat flour, all-purpose flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt until evenly blended.
3. In a medium bowl, using a fork, whisk together milk, oil, egg, and vanilla until blended.
4. Pour wet ingredients into dry ingredients, and stir until combined. Stir in cranberries and walnuts.
5. Spoon batter into muffin cups, filling about three-quarters full. Bake in centre of oven until a toothpick inserted in the centre of muffin comes out clean, about 25 minutes. Let stand for 5 minutes and remove.

### Storage Tips

Flaxseed is available whole or ground; whole flaxseed can be ground at home in a coffee grinder. Ground flax can be added to yogurt and hot cereals, and can be substituted for some of the flour in most baked goods. Walnuts taste great in other baked goods (such as loaves and cookies), sprinkled on salads, or as a snack on their own. Both flaxseed and walnuts should be stored in the refrigerator or freezer to preserve their quality and freshness.

