

# Omega-3 Centre<sup>®</sup>

UNDER STRICT EMBARGO until Sunday, November 15, 2009

## **WARNING - AUSSIE KIDS GRIM HEALTH OUTLOOK**

Desperately low intakes of long chain omega-3s could be placing Australian children at a greater risk of heart disease, asthma and ADHD as well as impacting their brain development, warns a leading health researcher and the author of new omega-3 consumption data released today.

Associate Professor Barbara Meyer, from the University of Wollongong's School of Health Sciences, said on average Australian children were consuming just 10 per cent of the long chain omega-3s they needed for heart health and general wellbeing.

"Our biggest killer is still heart disease and if our kids do not adopt a healthy diet up front, it could lead to serious health consequences later in life," Assoc. Prof. Meyer said.

"It's clear from my research that Australian children have critically low intakes of long chain omega-3 and despite increasing awareness about omega-3's health benefits, this vital health message is falling on deaf ears. Levels of long chain omega-3 consumption among Australian children have not improved since intakes were last assessed 13 years ago.

"My fears are not only for the future health outlook of our children, but I'm also concerned about the immediate health benefits they could be missing out on.

"There is compelling evidence linking long chain omega-3s with heart health and the development of children's brains, vision and nervous systems. It may also help with more immediate issues such as learning and behavioural difficulties, and potentially the increasing prevalence of ADHD and asthma."

Assoc. Prof. Meyer and Nithin Kolanu's research "*Long chain omega-3 intakes of Australian children*" is based on the analysis of long chain omega-3s consumption as identified in the Federal Government's Australian National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey (often referred to as 'Kids Eat Kids Play' Survey – it is the most fundamental review of children's dietary habits in 13 years).

It revealed on average half of the two to three year-olds consume less than 47mg of long chain omega-3s each day, while four to eight year olds consume less than 55mg.

The National Heart Foundation of Australia recommends all Australians, including children consume about 500mg per day of combined long chain omega-3s (DHA and EPA) to improve cardiovascular health<sup>1</sup>.

Oily fish (such as salmon, fresh or canned and canned sardines) are some of the richest sources of long chain omega-3s, while other sources include organ meats such as brains, and bone marrow, with eggs and lean red meat providing smaller amounts. There are also omega-3 fortified foods and fish oil supplements.

“I realise brains and bone marrow are not regulars on Aussie dinner tables, but as fish is an ideal source of long chain omega-3s just two fish meals a week would give children enough omega-3s to meet their recommended intake and could dramatically improve their immediate and long-term health prospects,” Assoc. Prof. Meyer said.

“The problem is that just one in 10 children eat fish. It’s critical for parents to place a priority on increasing fish and seafood meals. Lean red meat also contains some of these omega-3s (around 33mg per serve) and parents should consider the wide range of readily available long chain omega-3 enriched products including eggs, milk, yoghurt and bread, or alternatively long chain omega-3 supplements specifically designed for children.”

The “*Long chain omega-3 intakes of Australian children*” research was funded by The Omega-3 Centre with a scholarship grant for Nithin Kolanu.

For more information on the research and the health benefits of long chain omega-3 please refer to the Omega-3 Centre’s website [www.omega-3centre.com](http://www.omega-3centre.com). The website also includes a three day menu plan for children, further information on sources of long chain omega-3s with guidelines on amounts per serve, and details on how to read a supplement label.

<sup>1</sup>Fish, fish oils, n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids and cardiovascular health. National Heart Foundation Position Statement. 2008.

[http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/Professional\\_Information/Lifestyle\\_Risk/Nutrition/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/Professional_Information/Lifestyle_Risk/Nutrition/Pages/default.aspx)

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**Issued on behalf of the Omega-3 Centre [www.omega-3centre.com](http://www.omega-3centre.com)  
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