



# **Recommendation for Dietary Oily Fish & Fish Oil Capsules, (Omega 3 Fatty Acids) Following a Heart Attack**

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## NORTH WEST LONDON CARDIAC NETWORK RECOMMENDATION

### DIETARY OILY FISH and FISH OIL CAPSULES AFTER A HEART ATTACK

#### (OMEGA 3 FATTY ACIDS AFTER A MYOCARDIAL INFARCTION)

Further to NICE clinical guidance on MI secondary prevention, several clinicians and primary care trusts have queried advice on dietary oily fish and fish oil capsules.

This is a controversial area. The British Heart Foundation response to the NICE guidance is that it recommends increasing oily fish in the diet but does NOT recommend fish oil capsules for cardiac patients yet.

In response to this, the cardiac network has reviewed evidence on dietary fish oils and fish oil capsules and recommends:

1) Patients **should**, after a heart attack, apart from taking tablets of proven benefit (aspirin, ACE inhibitor, beta blocker, statin) be advised to:

- **Eat TWO to FOUR portions of oily fish a week** (NICE guidance)
  - e.g. fresh and tinned herring, sardines, mackerel, salmon, or trout and fresh (but not tinned) tuna
  - one portion is 140g or a SMALL tin
  - this provides an average of 1g omega 3 fatty acids daily
  - this may be the best way of getting fish oils as it means you are likely to be eating less unhealthy saturated fats from meat or dairy produce.
  - omega 3 fatty acids may help prevent further heart attacks as they keep the heart beat regular, reduce other fats and prevent clots.

2) If patients cannot increase oily fish in the diet to this level (20% in research studies, may be a higher proportion in general practice) AND have had a heart attack **in the last 3 months**, they *may* benefit from taking fish oil capsules for up to 4 years (NICE guidance).

- Patients in this group should discuss this with their GP in light of what other treatment they are on. The benefit is NOT clear cut from the research because:
  - One study of people who had had a heart attack in the last 3 months showed benefit from taking fish oil capsules but another smaller study did not.
  - The added benefit is uncertain for UK people **already on statins**.
  - Fish oil capsules can cause nausea as a side effect and interfere with **other medicines** e.g. aspirin, warfarin, clopidogrel
  - Further research is being called for to investigate what the added benefit is, if any, in patients taking the other medicines already recommended and in patients who have had a heart attack more than three months ago.

3) For patients who have had a heart attack more than 3 months ago, fish oil capsules are NOT recommended.

4) Patients, after a heart attack, should NOT start fish oil capsules without discussing the benefits, risks, interactions with other medicines and side effects with their GP.