

Omega-3 fatty acids for Childhood Depression

Unfortunately, major depressive disorders in children are becoming more frequent, and delaying (or eliminating) the need for pharmaceutical therapy has become the goal in many of these patients. Long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids from fish (EPA and DHA) have shown much promise in the treatment of depression and related disorders in adults. Data from a pilot study was published suggesting that children with depression may also greatly benefit by omega-3 therapy. 20 of 28 children completed the trial (half receiving placebo and half receiving 600 mg of EPA & DHA (2:1 ratio) per day). 7 of 10 children receiving the omega-3 supplement had a greater than 50% reduction in the Children's Depression Rating Scale (4 out of 10 reached remission criteria); while none of those on placebo reached either end point. While this study was very small and additional studies are needed, the numerous other benefits provided by omega-3 fatty acids from fish make this a safe and promising approach for children with depressive disorders.

References:

Omega-3 fatty acids in ADHD and related neurodevelopmental disorders. *Int Rev Psychiatry*. 2006 Apr;18(2):155-72.

A quantitative analysis of prenatal intake of n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids and cognitive development. *Am J Prev Med*. 2005 Nov;29(4):366-74.

Omega-3 polyunsaturated essential fatty acid status as a predictor of future suicide risk. *Am J Psychiatry*. 2006 Jun;163(6):1100-2.

Efficacy of ethyl-eicosapentaenoic acid in bipolar depression: randomised double-blind placebo-controlled study. *Br J Psychiatry*. 2006 Jan;188:46-50.