

# Possible Benefits of Fish Oils

Most people when withdrawing from Seroxat - and other SSRI medication for that matter – want to know what they can do to help to minimise their withdrawal reactions. There are no easy answers to this question: its all very much-uncharted territory. A good starting point would be to look at the withdrawal plans on this website, as they seem to be one of the best ways of withdrawing from Seroxat; indeed, many people find the liquid version greatly helps to ease and minimise their withdrawal. As these plans have been designed by Dr David Healy you can rest assured they have had expert input.

There is a possibility that fish oils (omega 3) have a place in helping to reduce withdrawal symptoms; though I must stress that this is an unproven theory and has no research to validate it. However, fish oils are very safe and there can be little harm in exploring this possibility. First we need some background...

## *Essential Fats*

Just like there are certain vitamins that you need to have on a day-to-day basis, there are fats, essential fats, which are needed too. These are the omega 3 and the omega 6 fats; without these essential fats in our diet, our body cannot function effectively. In today's western diet we get plenty of omega 6, from things like cooking oils, margarine's etc but very little in the way of a good supply of omega 3; found in fish like salmon, herring, mackerel, tuna etc. Vegetarian sources being found in Soya beans, and flax and hemp seeds. The flow charts below show a bit more about these essential oils: this is just for further information and it is not important that you understand it.

## *Omega 3*

Alpha Linolenic acid - - - > EPA - - - > DHA - - - > Prostagladin Type 3  
From oils of flax, pumpkin and Walnut, Soya bean etc      both from fish oils      impt hormone-like molecular needed by the body

## *Omega 6*

Linoleic acid- - - > GLA- - ->Arachidonic acid- - -> Prostagladin Type 2  
Oils of corn, Sunflower,etc      meat, milk      impt hormone-like molecule needed by the body  
Prostagladin Type 1  
Important hormone-like molecule needed by the body

The ideal ratio of these fats in the diet should be 1:1 (though some researchers suggest Omega 3:omega 6 of 2:1.) The ideal ratio in the brain is thought to be 1:1; unfortunately, today's diet typically provides 20 Omega 6 to 1 omega 3; this is a gross inequality that can have adverse effects on health.

Omega 3 oils – EPA and DHA – fish oils to you and I, are crucial to the functioning of the whole human body; for the immune system, cardiovascular (heart) system etc, and particularly the brain and nervous system. The brain is 60% fat; it's a FAcT, and the omegas 3's (fish oils) are crucial to this make up of the brain, in that they are need to form the receptors on cell membranes and for the cell membranes themselves.

## *Fish oils and psychiatric illness*

Fish Oils, at the right dosage, have been shown to be effective treatment for psychiatric disorders, the most promising being the treatment of bipolar affective disorder. In this disorder patients can go from being deeply depressed (and anxious) to the highs of mania.

No one is really sure why fish oils should be effective in treating psychiatric conditions. Many mechanisms have been proposed, most focusing on the fact that these oils are needed to form the receptors that various brain chemicals (neurotransmitters) like serotonin, noradrenaline, GABA, dopamine etc bind to; or focusing on how these oils change the very function of the cell membrane therefore controlling how the cell operates. By some unclear- as-yet mechanism this has shown to have beneficial effects in a variety of psychiatric conditions. There is evidence to suggest they treat depressive symptoms; low mood, lack of appetite etc and manic symptoms; aggressive behaviour, agitation etc

### *How might this help withdrawal?*

This could possibly help withdrawal in a numerous ways:

1. When on medications like Seroxat, a process call down-regulation of receptors occurs. This can best be explained as follows: Seroxat blocks reuptake of serotonin, therefore there is more serotonin available; due to this the brain removes serotonin receptors, as less are needed. However, on withdrawal, due to there being less Seroxat, the whole process is reversed and now the brain needs to 'regrow' serotonin receptors. This process is call up-regulation. So there will be a time lag when there aren't enough serotonin receptors for the available serotonin; this time lag may be responsible for some of the symptoms of withdrawal such as 'rebound' depression etc. By substituting in fish oils you will provide your brain with the raw materials need to make receptors and hopefully this will have a beneficial effect.
2. Many users report that one of the most distressing withdrawal symptoms they encounter is increased aggression, anger, and agitation. These could be also be described as "mania-like" symptoms; as fish oils are beneficial in mania there is a possibility that they will help these symptoms of withdrawal.
3. They may help many other withdrawal symptoms – until you try the method there is no way of knowing what might be helped.

The positive aspect of taking fish oils, is that no matter what, they will have some sort of positive influence on your health. Such as helping protect against heart disease, maintaining healthy blood pressure etc.

As already mentioned this is just a theory, there has been no research whatsoever to suggest that fish oils can help with withdrawal. However, as fish oils are very safe for most people there can be little harm in trying this idea; in fact the safety of omega 3s in born out by the fact that the Inuit eat approximately 18 grams a day!

As with any supplement it is advisable to check with your doctor before starting fish oils, especially if you are on other medications or have other health issues.

## *Dosage*

In clinical trials dosages of up to 6.2g EPA and 3.4g DHA have been used. This can be used as a rough guideline to how much you can/will take. It is also advisable to add in about 500mg-1000mg Vitamin C and 200-400 IU of vitamin E as these will protect the fatty acids from a reaction in the body called oxidation that can render them useless.

As it is important to keep the ratio of omega 6: omega 3 in balance, it would be sensible to use a product that does just this. Higher Nature makes such a product, called Essential Omegas; each capsule contains 600mg EPA, 400mg DHA for the omega 3's and 200mg GLA for the omega 6's.

If you are vegetarian then you can use flax seed oil as your source of Omega 3; the only disadvantage of this being that you cannot guarantee how much of the Alpha linolenic acid will be converted into EPA and DHA. Good oil for this purpose is Udo's Choice, distributed by Savant Distributions.

It is also advisable to keep all oils or capsules in the refrigerator as this will help keep them fresh. Also do not use fish 'liver oil' capsules as these also contain vitamin A which could rise to toxic levels with the dosage schedule here.

## *Final Comment*

There is no proof that any of the above will help in withdrawal, however, omega 3 oils are beneficial for health and are indeed part of a healthy diet. Also there is a possibility that this may help some people. It is advisable before starting any treatment protocol to discuss matters with your doctor first, so that he may advise you as to whether there are any contraindications for you.

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## *Further Reading*

The Omega 3 Connection by Dr Andrew L Stoll; Simon and Schuster

Dr Stoll is the psychiatrist who conducted the impressive trial of Fish Oils in bipolar disorder.

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