



## A Good Foundation

In my nutrition practice, a substantial potency multivitamin, fish oil, and extra vitamin D supplementation are the beginning point for each and every one of my nutrition protocols. They are the foundation of nutritional well-being.

—JOLIE MARTIN ROOT

**Every mother wants** what's best for her child. To maximize a baby's intelligence, studies suggest that women should begin taking fish oils during pregnancy. This is because docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), one of the omega-3 fatty acids found in cod liver oil, plays a fundamental role in the development of the central nervous system. Smart moms — those who take fish oils during pregnancy — have smart babies!

BY JOLIE MARTIN ROOT

# Give Your Child a Healthy Edge

## THE MANY BENEFITS OF COD LIVER OIL

### AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

The benefits of cod liver oil to a growing child extend far beyond the womb. Cod liver oil is an excellent source of omega-3 essential fatty acids with the added benefits of fat-soluble vitamins A and D.

Children (and the rest of us) need fats in their diets to be healthy. Healthy fats supply nutrients that are essential for growth. They are vitally important to the brain. Healthy fats are used for building cell membranes and also play a role in hormone production.

### LEARNING AND BEHAVIOR

Infants whose diets include plenty of DHA have an edge in terms of early development. Research shows that children whose mothers had higher DHA levels at delivery had better attention spans well into their second year. During their first six months, these babies were two months ahead of children born to mothers with lower DHA levels.

As children progress through early childhood, the benefits of

cod liver oil become even more pronounced. Essential fatty acids (EFAs) are some of the most important nutrients for reducing the risk of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). A deficiency of omega-3 fats has consistently been linked to ADHD. And studies show that the lower the level of omega-3s, the more pronounced the symptoms. A diagnosis of ADHD might truly be an omega-3 deficiency in disguise. In one study, ADHD patients reporting symptoms indicative of omega-3 deficiency (thirst, frequent urination, and dry hair) had lower levels of DHA than did ADHD patients without these symptoms. Subjects with low omega-3 fatty acid levels also had more behavioral problems.

Research shows that DHA and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) found in cod liver oil also support a healthy mood. Sadly, antidepressants are commonly prescribed to school-aged children. It is possible that their depression may be a result of their need for more omega-3s.

### EXTENDED BENEFITS

The benefits of cod liver oil for children extend far beyond the health of the brain. The DHA in cod liver oil may help reduce the risk of early heart disease in children who have familial hypercholesterolemia, or high cholesterol. In one study, children given DHA supplements experienced improved blood-vessel health after only a few months.

Cod liver oil is also a great source of vitamin D, a nutrient essential for building a strong skeleton. Children who do not get adequate D are at risk of developing rickets, a disease of weakened bones.

Osteomalacia, or softening of the bones, is common when vitamin D levels are inadequate and, in adults, vitamin D deficiency can contribute to osteoporosis. Low vitamin D levels in infants is also associated with greater risk of developing Type 1 diabetes. The risk is so great that pediatricians suggest that all breast-fed infants get 200 IU of vitamin D daily.

Cod liver oil also provides safe levels of vitamin A, which is necessary for sharper vision and for maintaining a vital immune system. Many clinical trials show that vitamin A helps reduce mortality in children.

### CREATING BALANCE

The balance of omega-3 to omega-6 EFAs is important. Today's typical excess of omega-6 fats (found in commercial vegetable oils) creates an imbalance that can contribute to inflammation, depressed immunity, heart disease, learning disabilities, and liver damage. The key is to reduce amounts of the omega-6s while boosting the omega-3s that most children lack. ►

# The Eye Care Revolution

by Robert Abel, Jr., M.D.



Dr. Robert Abel, Jr., has been in practice for 34 years. Dr. Abel co-founded the integrative medicine curriculum at Thomas Jefferson University where he is a former clinical professor of ophthalmology. He has helped blind eye laser, holds patents on artificial cornea, and received the senior honor award from the American Academy of Ophthalmology. Dr. Abel has long been a nationally renowned teacher of conventional eye therapy. He has written 4 books on the subject of eye health and nutrition.

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## OMEGA-3s ARE A HEALTHY STARTING POINT



If a child is eating a lot of trans fats (found in most junk foods) or doesn't get adequate vitamins and minerals, his body may not be able to make the most of the fats in the cod liver oil. The body needs vitamins A, B6, C, E, magnesium, zinc, copper, and selenium to properly metabolize omega-3s.

Cod liver oil should complement a well-balanced diet. Aim for at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day, and make it easy for your child to choose healthy snacks by having pre-cut and ready-to-eat fruits and veggies, nuts, and whole-grain breads and cereals on hand—avoid fast foods and low-nutrient snacks.

In addition to cod liver oil, a multivitamin can help ensure adequate nutrient intake. Combined with a healthy diet, a high-quality multi can supplement the nutrients in our food and ensure that your child gets adequate levels of important key nutrients that promote health and aid the metabolism of omega-3s. A children's multivitamin/mineral formula will provide adequate doses of all the nutrients kids need most.

Creating an omega balance is one of the most important benefits of cod liver oil. Depending on the brand, one-half teaspoon per day is enough for most children. Most teenagers may take adult doses. Be sure to read label directions carefully.

Since children are more vulnerable to environmental

toxins, be absolutely sure that any cod liver oil supplement given to a child states right on the label that it has been tested and found to be free of contaminants like mercury, lead, cadmium, and PCBs. Look for a product specially formulated for children. Many kids' formulas provide omega-3s and taste great, not fishy. ✨

"Docosahexaenoic Acid Restores Endothelial Function in Children with Hyperlipidemia" by M. M. Engler et al., *Int J Clin Pharmacol Ther*, 12/04 • "Effect of Supplementation with Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids and Micronutrients on Learning and Behavior Problems Associated with Child ADHD" by N. Sinn and J. Bryan, *J Dev Behav Pediatr*, 4/07 • "Pregnant? Omega-3 Essential for Baby's Brain" by Salynn Boyles, *WebMD Health News*, 2004