

*Fish oil supplements and regular exercise both reduce body fat and improve cardiovascular and metabolic health.*

### Regular Exercise and Fish Oil May Keep Arteries Clear and Reduce Body Fat

A combination of prolonged exercise and fish oil can dramatically reduce levels of a fat that can cause hardening of the arteries, a leading cause of heart disease. Fat in the bloodstream is a primary contributor to atherosclerosis, or partial blockage of the arteries.

A recent study found that people who do prolonged, aerobic exercise have muscle cells that are able to quickly break down and reduce levels of a fat called triglycerides. Taking a fish oil supplement can reduce triglyceride levels even more.

The researchers studied triglyceride levels in recreationally active men after they'd eaten high-fat meals. One group ate a fatty meal after they exercised. A second group ate a high-fat meal after taking a four-gram fish oil supplement. A third group ate a high-fat meal after exercising and taking the fish oil supplement. A control group ate a high-fat meal only.

The study found a 38 percent decline in peak triglyceride levels in the men who took a fish oil supplement before they ate a high-fat meal. Peak triglyceride levels dropped 50 percent in the men who exercised and took a fish oil supplement before they ate a high-fat meal.

Regular exercise and fish oil supplements may be beneficial for people who are concerned about maintaining a healthy triglyceride level.

*Metabolism. 2004 Oct;53(10):1365-71.*

In a similar, more recent study, combining fish-oil supplements with regular exercise improved both body composition and heart disease risk factors. Overweight participants with various heart disease risk factors were assigned to one of three groups: Fish oil (approximately 1.9 grams/day of omega-3 fats), fish oil and exercise, or placebo (sunflower oil). The exercise group walked 3 days/week for 45 minutes. Heart disease risk factors and body composition were measured at 0, 6, and 12 weeks. The group taking fish oil had a significant reduction in triglycerides, increased HDL cholesterol, and improved arterial vasodilation (blood flow). Both fish oil and exercise independently reduced body fat.

This study showed that increasing intake of omega 3 fatty acids could be a useful addition to exercise programs aimed at improving body composition and decreasing cardiovascular disease risk.

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