Fish Oil

Research on fish oil has shown benefits for several health conditions in dogs and cats. Fish oil is high in omega-3 fatty acids called EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid).

ALA (alpha-linolenic acid) is another omega-3 fatty acid found in vegetable oils. Flaxseed has the highest amount of it.

Humans can convert ALA into DHA and EPA. Dogs and cats, however, can’t do this well, so it’s fish oil for them.

Benefits

Some of the benefits of fish oil include:

- Anti-inflammatory effects
- Heart benefits
- Reducing high blood pressure
- Immune system benefits
- Helping kidney disease
- Improving arthritis
- Helping with cancer
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease
- Itchy skin - allergies
- Controlling high triglycerides

Different conditions require different doses for fish oil to be effective. Often people think fish oil doesn’t help, even some research seems to show that, but it’s usually because the dose wasn’t high enough.

Research in dogs have shown this:

- Improvement in the amount of itchiness in dogs with skin problems
- Dogs with heart problems were less likely to have atrial fibrillation and arrhythmias (irregular heart beats)
- Dogs with heart problems ate better while taking fish oil and were less likely to lose weight (a big concern with advanced heart disease)
- Dogs with kidney disease were less likely to have high blood pressure and had less protein in their urine (too much protein indicates the kidneys aren’t working properly)
- Kidney blood values were better
- Dogs with arthritis moved better and limped less
- Helps to lower high triglycerides
- Improved survival times for dogs with lymphoma and has been shown to benefit other cancers
Although there haven’t been as many studies in cats, cats appear to respond as dogs do. Therefore, fish oil can be an important supplement for them as well. Many dogs like the taste of fish oil and will readily eat it. Cats, on the other hand, often won’t.

**What to choose**

There are many pet products available. Most veterinarians carry fish oil and you can get it from pet stores and online. Many human capsules are too large for small pets so a pet product is often the best.

A liquid with a pump to squirt onto your pet’s food can be handy to use. You can also poke a hole in a capsule and squirt it on the food. Some pet versions come with a little tab that you tear off to open the capsule.

Most dogs like the taste of fish oil and will readily eat it. Cats, on the other hand, often won’t. Start with a very small amount, preferably mixed in wet food. If your cat will eat that, try adding a little more each day. If your cat won’t eat the full dose, it’s still beneficial to give a small amount.

Cod liver oil can be used. However, some cod liver oils are high in vitamin A and could cause a problem. Make sure the product you use has no more than 2,000 IU vitamin A per teaspoon of oil. If it’s not listed, use a different fish oil or call the company.

Kril oil works similarly but doesn’t lower blood pressure. It is better to use fish oil.

**Cautions**

Fish oil can lower vitamin E levels. Many fish oil products contain vitamin E to counteract that. Vitamin E also acts as a preservative.

If your cat is hyperthyroid and you are feeding a low iodine diet, be careful with fish oil. Make sure the fish oil you have doesn’t have more than 1.5ug iodine per 1000mg fish oil (you may need to call the company to find out).

If your pet is on medicine to lower blood pressure or to prevent clotting, fish oil can do the same things. Ask your veterinarian if it’s safe to use fish oil.

**Dose**

The dose for fish oil is calculated on metabolic body weight. The equation is based on body weight in kilograms (kg) to the 0.75\textsuperscript{th} power (mg/kg\textsuperscript{0.75}). Unless you are a math whiz, this is pretty hard to figure out.

Here is the important information you need to know. Fish oil is used in different doses based on the condition being treated. For example, the dose for inflammatory problems, such as skin allergies, is about one-third the dose needed to treat arthritis.

The arthritis dose is close to the maximum dose so the important thing to know is how high you can safely go. The maximum dose is 370mg/kg\textsuperscript{0.75}. If you go higher than this, you may suppress the immune system instead of helping it.
The table lists **maximum doses** for different body weights calculated on metabolic body weight. *Don’t give more than this!*

The fish oil dose is the combined amount of EPA and DHA (the two fatty acids in fish oil). The label may list a higher amount of “fish oil”. Look at the label on the bottle and add the EPA and DHA together.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body weight in pounds</th>
<th>Body weight in kilograms</th>
<th>MAXIMUM amount of fish oil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 lb.</td>
<td>4.5 kg</td>
<td>1140 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 lb.</td>
<td>11.4 kg</td>
<td>2294 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 lb.</td>
<td>15.9 kg</td>
<td>2946 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 lb.</td>
<td>22.7 kg</td>
<td>3848 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 lb.</td>
<td>27.3 kg</td>
<td>4415 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 lb.</td>
<td>34 kg</td>
<td>5180 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 lb.</td>
<td>38.6 kg</td>
<td>5730 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 lb.</td>
<td>45.5 kg</td>
<td>6475 mg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For most conditions and for general health, give one-third of the maximum amount. For kidney disease give one-half and for arthritis give 90% (so be cautious!).

This is the amount to give each day. Divide the daily amount in half and give half in the morning and half in the evening.

If you are feeding a diet that is high in omega-3 fatty acids (for instance a joint diet or kidney diet), you may need to give a lower amount of supplement. Take this into consideration when choosing a dose.

If this is too complicated, you may find it easier to buy a pet product and follow the dose on the bottle. However, keep in mind, the listed dose may be lower than needed to treat some conditions but is probably adequate for general health.

**Summary**

Much research has been done on fish oil in pets, and it has been shown to be a great addition for treating many conditions. Because of its benefits to the immune system, it is a good supplement for all pets. Unfortunately, some conditions may not respond as well if you try to treat them in later stages. Early treatment, even before our pets get sick, is ideal.

**Thanks for Caring**

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