

CMA Media Release

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New Study Shows Benefits of Omega-3 during Pregnancy

Complementary Medicines Australia (CMA) has welcomed a new Cochrane Review, 'Omega-3 fatty acid addition during pregnancy', which has found that increasing the intake of omega-3 long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids (LCPUFA) during pregnancy reduces the risk of premature births.

Mr Carl Gibson, ceo of Complementary Medicines Australia (CMA), said: "The study, conducted by scientists from the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI), included a total of 70 randomised controlled trials and involved almost 20 000 women. It shows that there's high quality evidence for omega-3 supplementation being an effective strategy for preventing preterm birth."

"According to the World Health Organisation, prematurity is the leading cause of death in children under the age of 5 years, with an estimated 15 million babies being born too soon every year. Premature babies can face long-term health issues including visual impairment, developmental delay and learning difficulties."

"Premature birth is a very serious health problem; global rates are seen to be increasing and high income countries are not immune. It's interesting to note that the trials including in the Cochrane study were predominantly conducted in high income countries, such as Australia, the USA and England, and included women who were both at normal and high risk for poor pregnancy outcomes."

"The study findings are very important, as the causes of premature labour are not fully understood and options for prevention are limited. It comes as no surprise that omega-3 supplementation in pregnancy is of such great interest to researchers around the world, as it may offer a simple and affordable way to decrease the risk of premature births."

"The researchers found that the optimum dose was a daily supplement containing between 500 and 1000 milligrams (mg) of long-chain omega-3 fats (containing at least 500mg of DHA) starting at 12 weeks of pregnancy."

CMA strongly advocates that individuals follow instructions and dosage guidance on labels, and seek advice from a healthcare provider.

A series of resources and information about omega-3 fatty acids for pregnant women and health professional has been prepared by a team from SAHMRI, including Cochrane researchers from the omega-3 review, which can be accessed at www.sahmriresearch.org/omega3.

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For Media Interviews or Further Information Contact:

CMA, Chief Executive

Carl Gibson

+61 457 028 974