

Abstract

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Cardiovascular effects of marine omega-3 fatty acids.

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BACKGROUND: Much evidence shows that the marine omega-3 fatty acids eicosapentaenoic acid and docosahexaenoic acid have beneficial effects in various cardiac disorders, and their use is recommended in guidelines for management of patients after myocardial infarction.

DISCUSSION: However, questions have been raised about their usefulness alongside optimum medical therapies with agents proven to reduce risk of cardiac events in high-risk patients. Additionally, there is some evidence for a possible pro-arrhythmic effect in subsets of cardiac patients. Some uncertainty exists about the optimum dose needed to obtain beneficial effects and the relative merit of dietary intake of omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids versus supplements.

SUMMARY: We review evidence for the effects of omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids on various cardiac disorders and the risk factors for cardiac disease. We also assess areas of uncertainty needing further research.

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