

# Fish oil supplements boost mental performance: study

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(Medical Xpress) -- A particular fish oil supplement has been shown to improve blood flow to the brain during mental activity and helped to reduce mental fatigue in young adults, according to research from Northumbria University.

In the first of two studies, currently available in the online edition of the *British Journal of Nutrition*, researchers found that overall, taking either of two different types of [fish oil](#) supplement containing omega-3 for three months had no consistent impact on mental function in 18 – 35-year-olds. However they did find evidence of reduced [mental fatigue](#) and faster reaction times.

Contrary to popular belief, these results suggest that taking omega-3 or fish oil supplements may not have an immediate or measureable impact on mental performance in healthy [young adults](#). This is possibly due to the fact that this population is already performing at its mental peak or that higher doses or a longer testing period are required.

Interestingly, in the second of these studies it was found that taking DHA-rich fish oil over the same time period did increase blood flow to active areas of the [brain](#) during performance of similar mental tasks.

The researchers claim these findings could have implications for mental function later on in life, as evidence suggests regularly eating oily fish or taking omega-3 supplements may prevent cognitive decline and dementia, and increased blood flow to the brain may be a mechanism by which this occurs.

As these results suggest that benefits may be seen with longer term supplementation in older age groups, researchers now plan to investigate this in people between the ages of 50 and 70 to assess the impact of a fish oil supplement on their memory, [mental performance](#) and blood flow to the brain.

Lead researcher Dr Philippa Jackson said: "If we can pinpoint both the behavioural and brain [blood flow](#) effects of this fatty acid in older healthy people, then the benefits for those with mental degenerative conditions associated with normal ageing could be that much greater."

Researchers are hoping to recruit more people to take part in the study to investigate the effects of DHA in older people.

Provided by Northumbria University

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