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SCHIZOPHRENIA Factsheet

October 2020

What are essential fatty acids?

Essential fatty acids have been proposed as a potential alternative treatment. The two main EFAs are omega-3 and omega-6. They are important compounds for brain function, as they have impact on membrane receptors, ion channels and synapse function, as well as neuronal development. However, they are not made in the body and must be sourced from the diet. People with schizophrenia have shown to have lower levels of these essential compounds and their products, including omega-3 products docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), its ester, ethyl-eicosapentaenoic acid (E-EPA), omega-6 product arachidonic acid (AA), and their metabolites including prostaglandins.

What is the evidence for essential fatty acids?

Overall, low quality evidence is unclear of any benefit of omega-3 as an alternative to neuroleptic medication for people with schizophrenia. There could be some benefit of omega-3 fatty acids compared to placebo for preventing transition to psychosis for up to one-year post-treatment in those at ultra-high risk of psychosis.

For more information see the technical table

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

We are able to make significant advances due to the generosity of countless people. Your donation allows us to continue to work towards transforming lives. For information on how you can support our research, phone **1300 888 019** or make a secure donation at neura.edu.au/donate/schizophrenia.



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NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent medical and clinical research institutes in Australia and an international leader in neurological research.

Diseases of the brain and nervous system pose the greatest health, economic and social burden of any disease group because they are chronic, debilitating and have no known cures.

Medical research is the cornerstone of efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of families and the community. Our dedicated scientists are focussed on transforming their research into significant and practical benefits for all patients.

While we hope you find this information useful, it is always important to discuss any questions about schizophrenia or its treatment with your doctor or other health care provider.