



Modern Diet May Be Contributing to Depression

Depression in the United States

Based on a report by the Bipolar Support Alliance, depression is the most common serious brain disease in the United States, affecting more than 23 million adults each year. A major contributory factor to this depression may be found in the modern diet, particularly the imbalance of essential fatty acids omega-3 and omega-6.

People Consume Less Omega-3 Today

Research continues to present solid scientific evidence of omega-3 fatty acids for heart and joint health, and brain function. Sources of omega-3 are oily fish such as mackerel, salmon, and tuna, raw nuts and seeds, soybeans, and flaxseed oils. These kinds of foods were more commonly eaten fifty years ago, but overtime people ate less of these types of foods while increasing the consumption of meat, poultry, eggs, breads, baked goods, cereals, various vegetable oils and margarine. This has resulted in a higher intake of omega-6 fatty acids to omega-3.

Depressed People Have Less Omega-3 in the Brain

In previous studies dealing with fatty acids and depression, it was found that when the levels of omega-3 fatty acids in the brains of people who were depressed were measured they were lower than normal. This told the scientists that a lower intake of omega-3 will lead to a decreased amount in the brain possibly contributing to depression.

Study Comparing Essential Fatty Acids in Brains of Rats

Due to the inability to study the brains of humans and their high dietary variability, it was decided to conduct a study to examine and compare the brains of rats. This study was done by Dr Pnina Green of Tel Aviv University and Dr Gal Yadid of Bar-Ilan University. Their findings were recorded in the Journal of Lipid Research.

Brains of Depressed Rats Reveal Much Higher Levels Of Omega-6

In this study two groups of rats were fed the same diet. Examination of the rats' brains revealed significant differences in the levels of omega-6 fatty acids. In all regions of the brains of the depressed rats there was much higher levels of a long-chain unsaturated metabolite of omega-6, arachidonic acid.

"The finding that in the depressive rats the omega-3 fatty acid levels were not decreased, but arachidonic acid was substantially increased as compared to controls is somewhat unexpected," said Dr. Green.

"The finding lends itself nicely to the theory that increased omega-3 fatty acid intake may shift the balance between the two fatty acid families in the brain, since it has been demonstrated in animal studies that increased omega-3 fatty acid intake may result in decreased brain arachidonic acid."

Not Recommended to Eliminate Omega-6 Completely

Dr. Green does not recommend eliminating the removal of omega-6 completely because these fatty acids are essential for health, such as the proper functioning of almost every organ in the body, including the brain, the production of series 1 prostaglandins, active hormone-like substances which prevents clots and blockages of blood vessels, relax blood vessels, lower blood pressure, maintain

water balance, decrease inflammation and pain, improve nerve and immune function, and assist insulin to work to control blood sugar.

More Omega-3 and Less Omega-6

Instead of eliminating omega-6 to control depression, Dr. Green suggests altering the balance between the two fatty acids by reducing the omega-6 and increasing the omega-3 so that the levels become more in line with the way people ate 50 years ago, more omega-3, and less omega-6.

This can be done by diet of course, and by supplementing with omega-3 dietary supplements. One such supplement is [Omega Plus + CLA™](#) by Live Well Naturally. It is a mixed fatty acid supplement, supplies important fatty acids that are often difficult to obtain from the diet, and was formulated to favor omega-3 fatty acids over omega-6 fatty acids to help maintain a healthy fatty acid ratio when added to typical diets that tend to be too low in omega-3.

DISCLAIMER: The information in this article is for educational purposes only, and is not intended to provide medical advice which should always be obtained from a qualified health practitioner, and has not been approved by the U.S. FDA.