Are Fish Oil Supplements a Waste of Money?

Study says previous claims that fish oil supplements reduce the risk of heart attack and death from heart disease are unfounded.

February 6, 2018 By Alicia Green

The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends omega-3 fish oil supplements for people at high risk for or a history of cardiovascular disease. However, recent findings published in the journal JAMA Cardiology suggest that these health products don't prevent death from heart disease, heart attacks or stroke, reports HealthDay.

For the assessment, investigators reviewed 10 trials that included nearly 78,000 patients given omega-3 fatty acids supplements or a placebo. Findings showed that in people who already suffered from heart disease or experienced a heart attack fish oil supplements reduced the risk of death by 7 percent and the risk of nonfatal heart attack by 3 percent—percentages scientists considered too small to be significant.

"The results of the analysis of large studies provide no support for current recommendations to use fish oil supplements to prevent heart attacks and strokes," said Robert Clarke, MD, a professor of epidemiology and population medicine at the University of Oxford and the study's lead author.

David Siscovick, MD, MPH, senior vice president for research at the New York Academy of Medicine in New York City and the first author on the AHA's guide to using omega-3 supplements, agreed with the study's findings to an extent.

He believes that although fish oil supplements don't stop deaths from heart disease in individuals with no history of such illnesses, omega-3 fatty acids may prove beneficial to those who suffer from heart disease or heart attack. (Research conducted by the AHA found that fish oil supplements were associated with a 10 percent reduction in death among this population.)

Siscovick advises patients to discuss these supplements with their doctor, as any small benefit they provide is worthy of consideration.

Click here to learn how supplements may help people with vitamin D deficiency lose pounds.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.