

A recent study indicates that supplementation of the omega-3 fatty acid DHA in healthy young adults with low dietary DHA intakes may improve memory and reaction time.

Supplementation with DHA improves cognitive performance in healthy adults

In a recent study, scientists investigated whether a DHA supplement improves cognitive performance in healthy young adults and whether there was a different response between genders. It is known that the omega-3 fatty acid DHA is important for neural development, and much research has been conducted regarding the benefit of DHA in elderly populations. The current study sought to determine whether DHA supplementation would have a benefit on memory and reaction time in healthy young adult men and women.

The study included 176 adult men and women between the ages of 18 and 45. The participants were non-smoking and had self-reported low dietary DHA intakes. The subjects were randomized to receive either a supplement of DHA (1.16 grams) or a placebo daily for six months. Cognitive performance was analyzed using battery of tests including episodic and working memory, attention, reaction time of episodic and working memory, and attention and processing speed. The tests were administered before and after the treatment period.

At the end of the study, those who received DHA showed improvement in the reaction time of episodic and working memory. Compared with the placebo, DHA improved episodic memory in women and reaction times of working memory in men.

This is the first study to show that DHA supplementation may improve memory and reaction time of memory in healthy non-smoking adults whose diets are habitually low in DHA. It also indicates that response to supplementation may be modulated by sex.

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