

Fish oil supplements linked with heart rhythm disorder

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Omega-3 supplements are associated with an increased likelihood of developing atrial fibrillation in people with high blood lipids. That's the finding of a study published today in *European Heart Journal—Cardiovascular Pharmacotherapy*, a journal of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC).

"Currently, fish oil supplements are indicated for patients with elevated plasma triglycerides to reduce cardiovascular risk," said study author Dr. Salvatore Carbone of Virginia Commonwealth University, U.S. "Due to the high prevalence of elevated triglycerides in the population, they can be commonly prescribed. Of note, low dose omega-3 fatty acids are available over the counter, without the need for a prescription."

Some clinical trials have suggested that omega-3 fatty acids may be associated with an increased risk for atrial [fibrillation](#), the most common heart rhythm disorder. People with the disorder have a five times greater likelihood of having a stroke.

These studies tested different formulations of

omega-3 fatty acids at different doses. The authors therefore performed a comprehensive meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials to answer the question of whether fish oils were consistently related to a raised risk for atrial fibrillation.

The analysis included five randomized controlled trials investigating the effects of omega-3 fatty [acid](#) supplementation on cardiovascular outcomes. Participants had elevated triglycerides and were either at high risk for cardiovascular disease or had established cardiovascular disease. A total of 50,277 patients received fish oils or placebo and were followed up for between 2 and 7.4 years. The dose of fish oils varied from 0.84 g to 4 g per day.

The researchers found that omega-3 fatty acid supplementation was associated with a significantly increased risk for atrial fibrillation compared to placebo with an incidence rate ratio of 1.37 (95% confidence interval 1.22-1.54; p

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