

Omega-3 Fatty Acid Supplementation for Dogs and Cats with Heart Disease

Omega-3 fatty acids have a number of potential benefits in dogs and cats with heart disease, such as reducing inflammation and helping to protect against abnormal heart rhythms (arrhythmia). The dose of omega-3 fatty acids we currently recommend for dogs and cats with heart failure is 40 mg/kg eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) + 25 mg/kg docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) per day. There are a small number of commercial pet foods that contain enough fish oil to achieve this dose but it is also important to feed a diet that has a nutritional profile that is optimal for your pet's health status, so be sure to talk to your veterinarian. In most cases, supplements are needed to achieve this omega-3 fatty acid dose. Fish oil, which is high in omega-3 fatty acids, is the most appropriate supplement to be used for this purpose. Flaxseed/flaxseed oil also is high in omega-3 fatty acids but is ineffective for providing omega-3 fatty acids to dogs and cats so should be avoided. We also recommend avoiding cod liver oil for this purpose as it can provide toxic levels of vitamins A and D when used at this dose.

The total daily dose can be administered at a single time daily or can be divided over the course of the day

Please note:

1. Fish oil supplementation is not appropriate for all dogs and cats. If your pet has a sensitive gastrointestinal system or any medical condition that could predispose him/her to excessive bleeding, please discuss use of fish oil supplements with your veterinarian.
2. If your pet is eating a diet that has a high fish, fish meal, or fish oil content, an adjustment to this fish oil dose may be needed to avoid giving excessive levels of omega-3 fatty acids to your pet.
3. Not all supplements have appropriate concentrations of the individual fatty acids or have good quality control. Some of the brands that have had independent testing and that we recommend are listed below.

Product Name	Company	Price/100 mg of EPA+DHA	Daily dose*
Cats and Small or Medium-Sized Dogs			
CVS Fish Oil Capsules 1000 mg (180 mg EPA and 120 mg DHA per softgel)	CVS Pharmacy	2¢	1 capsule per 10 pounds body weight
Nature Made Fish Oil 1000 mg Liquid Softgels (180 mg EPA, 120 mg DHA)	Nature Made	2¢	1 capsule per 15 pounds body weight
Large Dogs			
Solgar Triple Strength Omega-3 950 (504 mg EPA and 378 mg DHA per softgel)	Solgar	3¢	1 capsule per 30 pounds body weight
Liquids			
Welactin Canine Liquid. Note: not independently tested	Nutramax	Variable	Follow label directions
Welactin Feline Liquid. Note: not independently tested	Nutramax	Variable	Follow label directions

*Note: If your pet is overweight, please talk to your veterinarian about an appropriate dose.

For further information about omega-3 fatty acid supplementation in dogs and cats with heart disease, see: Freeman LM. Beneficial effects of omega-3 fatty acids in cardiovascular disease. *Journal of Small Animal Practice* 2010; 51: 462-470.

To schedule an appointment with the Nutrition Service, please see our website: www.petfoodology.org.