

Omega-3 Fatty Acid Supplementation for Dogs and Cats

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 irregular heartbeats (arrhythmia). The dose of omega-3 fatty acids we currently recommend for dogs and cats with heart failure is 40mg/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 an optimal nutritional profile for each individual pet, 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 not recommended because it is ineffective for providing omega-3 fatty acids to dogs and cats. Avoid cod liver oil as it can provide toxic levels of vitamins A and D when used at this dose.

Important notes:

1. Fish oil is not appropriate for all dogs and cats. Talk to your veterinarian first if your pet has a sensitive gastrointestinal system or a medical condition that could predispose them to excessive bleeding.
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 too much omega-3 fatty acids.
3. If your pet is overweight, an adjusted dose should be determined by your veterinarian.
4. The total daily dose can be administered at a single time daily or can be divided over the course of the day.
5. 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 are listed below.

Product Name	Testing	Approx. Cost/100mg of EPA+DHA	Daily Dose
Capsules for Cats and Small or Medium Sized Dogs			
Nature Made Fish Oil 1200 mg softgels (180mg EPA + 120mg DHA per softgel)	USP	4¢	1 capsule per 10 pounds
NOW molecularly distilled omega-3 1000 mg softgels (180mg EPA + 120mg DHA per softgel)	—	3¢	1 capsule per 10 pounds
Solgar Omega-3 Fish Oil Concentrate 1000mg (160mg EPA + 100mg DHA per softgel)	—	5¢	1 capsule per 9 pounds
Capsules for Large Dogs			
GNC Triple Strength Fish Oil 1000 mg (734mg EPA + 266mg DHA per softgel)	CL	4¢	1 capsule per 33 pounds
GNC Triple Strength Fish Oil Mini (367mg EPA + 133mg DHA per softgel)	CL	5¢	1 capsule per 17 pounds
Nature Made Burp-Less Omega-3 from Fish Oil Minis extra Strength (340mg EPA + 125mg DHA per softgel)	USP	6¢	1 capsule per 16 pounds
Nature's Bounty Fish Oil 1400mg softgel (647mg EPA + 253mg DHA per softgel)	USP	4¢	1 capsule per 30 pounds
Solgar Triple Strength Omega-3 950 (504mg EPA + 378mg DHA per softgel)	CL	4¢	1 capsule per 29 pounds
Liquids			
Nordic Naturals Omega-3 Liquid for cats/small breed dogs or medium/large breed dogs (147mg EPA + 101mg DHA per mL)	NN	Variable	Use label directions (1mL per 8 pounds)
Welactin Canine or Feline Liquid (145mg EPA + 95mg DHA per mL)	—	Variable	Use label directions (1mL per 8 pounds)

Tufts HeartSmart website: A website for owners of dogs and cats with heart disease

<http://heartsmart.vet.tufts.edu/>

Recommended loading dose

- Give ¼ dose for 1st week
- Give ½ dose for 2nd week
- Give ¾ dose for 3rd week
- Give full dose for 4th week+