- Oils and fats

It's oil in your food

Don't rely solely on supplements for crucial omega-3 intake, look at what's for dinner, says

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WITH its powers to support heart brain and eye health, omega-3 is vital for our overall wellbeing. But consumers opting to get their dose of it through "high strength" supplements could be paying double and yet receiving low levels of the key active ingredients, according to an investigation by consumer watchdog Which?. Experts analysed 24 omega-3 supplements against guidance from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition which recommends an average daily intake of 450mg of the omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA. Several supplements contained less EPA and DHA than the recommended daily intake and no more than in cheaper alternatives. The retailers involved said their product labelling complied with the Nutrition and Health Claims Register. So, what is omega-3, why is it important and how do we increase our intake of it naturally via our diet? Registered nutritionist and dietitian Dr Sarah Schenker is here to explain...



FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Consider oily fish, nuts and seeds for increasing omega-3 in your diet

"There are lots of different types of fatty acids, and according to their structure, they can be omega-3, omega-6, omega-9, and the number relates to the position of what we call double bonds," says Dr Schenker. There are three main types of omega-3 fatty acids: ALA (alpha-linolenic acid), EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid).

"Our body cannot make ALA on its own, so we get it from plant sources such as chia seeds, walnuts, hemp seeds, flax seeds, soybeans and rape seed oil," says the dietitian. "Oily fish is the main food source of EPA and DHA."

"Keep it simple with smoked salmon," recommends Dr Schenker. "If you're looking for something easy for lunch, smoked salmon in a bagel or a sandwich is a good option. Smoked salmon also goes really nicely with scrambled or poached eggs."

MACKEREL: "Mackerel is also a great source of omega-3 and smoked mackerel just comes in a packet that you can add to a salad," says the dietitian.

SARDINES: "A tin of sardines is pretty cheap and there are lots of things you can do with them," says Dr Schenker. "Some people like to put them in tomato sauce or to have them on toast."

You can also make a fast, healthy, and creamy dip using canned sardines. "If you get sardines in oil, you can mash them together with a little bit of soft cheese and make a nice dip," suggests Dr

Schenker. TUNA: "Fresh tuna can be expensive, but it can be nice to have once in a while," says Dr Schenker. "Tuna steaks are pretty easy to cook as you can just pan fry them on one side for two minutes and then turn them over and do the same thing on the other side."
EDAMAME BEANS: "You can buy edamame beans from frozen and just chuck a handful into a stir fry, a salad or a soup," recommends the dietitian.
CHIA SEEDS: "Chia seeds can be expensive, but if you shop around you should be able to find a big bag of them in an international supermarket for a lower price," says Dr Schenker.
"You could soak them in yoghurt overnight which makes them swell up and makes a filling breakfast." FLAX SEEDS: "You could stir flax seeds through your yoghurt or muesli for breakfast," she suggests. WALNUTS: "A handful of walnuts are a good thing to have as a snack," says Dr Schenker.
"You can make a delicious dip with a small handful of breadcrumbs, walnuts, roasted red peppers, pomegranate molasses and olive oil," recommends Dr Schenker who says the dip will keep in the fridge for a few days. FORTIFIED PRODUCTS: "You can buy eggs that have come from hens that have been fed an omega-3 rich diet and you can even get fish fingers and butter that have been fortified with omega-3," says Dr Schenker.