

EPA in fish oil is good for the brain



The People's Pharmacy
Joe Graedon and Teresa Graedon

Q: What do you think of Vascepa? I understand it is a kind of purified fish oil with only EPA. That means it has no contaminants, such as mercury.

EPA is a strong anti-inflammatory. It contains no DHA and there's no risk of it being rancid.

A: Vascepa (icosapent ethyl) is a highly purified form of the omega-3 fatty acid, eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA). Doctors prescribe it to lower triglyceride levels and reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Many consumers opt for over-the-counter fish oil capsules to reduce inflammation. Such products often contain both EPA and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid). A new study suggests that EPA-rich supplements improve performance on tests of verbal fluency, word

recall, reaction time and numeric working memory as well as rapid visual information processing (American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, September 2021). This study was conducted with fish oil from BASF and not with Vascepa.

Side effects of Vascepa include an increased risk of atrial fibrillation or of excessive bleeding. Other complications may include muscle and joint pain, gout, edema and constipation.

Q: Have you heard of any Food and Drug Administration concerns with Revlimid coming from pharmaceutical companies in India? The price in the U.S. is outrageous, especially for a senior citizen.

A: We understand your dilemma. Revlimid (lenalidomide) is a critical medicine for the treatment of the blood cancer multiple myeloma. In the U.S., each pill can cost as much as \$800. The normal cycle requires 21 days of treatment a month. That could lead to a bill of around \$17,000. Even if you have insurance, the copay might be huge.

The FDA has not been able to inspect most foreign manufacturing plants

since early in the pandemic. As a result, it's hard to verify the quality of many medications made abroad. Your physician will need to monitor your progress carefully to make sure the medicine is working as anticipated.

One other option may be to seek financial help. Several patient assistance programs provide significant discounts for underinsured or low-income individuals on Revlimid. Each has its own eligibility requirements, but your oncologist might have someone on staff who could help you sort through them.

Q: I took lisinopril for three days and had an angioedema reaction. Luckily, the doctors in the emergency room diagnosed it quickly. They said they see this kind of reaction from lisinopril quite often.

This is one of the most frightening experiences I've ever had. My throat swelled shut. They pumped me full of steroids and kept me overnight for observation. The specialist I saw afterward said he also sees this pretty often.

A: Lisinopril is the most commonly prescribed blood pressure medicine in

the U.S. Many people tolerate it reasonably well. The most common side effect is a persistent cough that does not respond to treatment. It can be incredibly disruptive and keep people awake at night.

The angioedema complication you experienced is indeed potentially life threatening, as it can interfere with breathing. When the swelling occurs in the digestive tract, it can cause intestinal obstruction.

You will need a different type of BP medicine. To learn more about the pros and cons of various drugs and nonpharmaceutical approaches, you may wish to read our eGuide to Blood Pressure Solutions. This online resource can be found under the Health eGuides tab at www.PeoplesPharmacy.com.

In their column, Joe and Teresa Graedon answer letters from readers. Write to them in care of King Features, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803, or email them via their website: PeoplesPharmacy.com. Their newest book is "Top Screwups Doctors Make and How to Avoid Them."

Doctor inspired from young age to follow medical career

Florida Today
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Q: Why did you go into this career?

A: My mom was very sick when I was young, and her doctor had his own clinic on the south side of Chicago. The guy was brilliant. He figured out what was wrong and started her on medication that was ahead of its time.

I was there at the appointments and this doctor would tell her about some of the places he would go to learn about medicine. If he wanted to learn about acupuncture he would go to China; if he wanted to learn about the benefits of hot springs he would go somewhere in Eastern Europe.

He encouraged me to pursue medicine, talking to me about his practice both in the U.S. and on mission trips. I was 11 years old at the time, and I thought, "Wow, this sounds like something I would want to do."

Q: What services do you provide?

A: I practice internal medicine, which includes wellness exams and preventative care, as well as the treatment of chronic illnesses.

I also treat short-term illnesses, such as minor skin infections, lacerations, sprains, strains, UTI and flu.

I assist people in navigating the referral process when a condition requires multiple specialists.

My No. 1 priority is education: why

you need to check your blood pressure, why you need to take your diabetes medication or make lifestyle changes.

Q: What makes this area of medicine fulfilling for you?

A: Seeing people improve, that's the best part of it — making them move toward health rather than chronic illness.

Working in the ER really suited my personality well: I could give people all I had when they were in front of me. But working with patients long-term, seeing them improve, is also very fulfilling.

Q: When did you realize this was the right medical career path for you?

A: When I was in my 20s, I found that I was not only treating my patients but giving them advice about the home environments they were in and how that was contributing to their conditions.

That was the point when I realized I was suited to this career path.

Q: What's the latest advancement in your field that will benefit patients?

A: The COVID vaccine is the most lifesaving, life-altering thing we've got right now. I am very much an advocate.

My community — I'm African American — is reticent about taking it. And so, that's going to be one of my platforms as a physician, to advocate for them taking care of themselves. It truly is a matter of life and death for some people.



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Get to Know Your Health Pro

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Education: I did my undergraduate work at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. After that, I received my medical training from Loyola Medical School in Maywood, Ill. My residency was at Loyola Medical School and Foster McGaw Hospital.

Professional Background: Since 1990, I have worked consistently for one health system emergency room in some capacity. I have done travel medicine my entire career and have benefited from observing medical practice in different regions of the country. However, I'm now ready to commit to one location and one hospital system: Steward Health Care in Brevard County.

My mission trips over the years include Nicaragua, Tanzania, South Africa, Kenya, Haiti and Liberia. I've been to Kenya six times.

Ronsisvalle

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was convinced marijuana had robbed her of motivation and investment in her future, but she just could not stop using.

Here you have two completely different individuals who are struggling with a very similar process: how does a human being create lasting behavior change?

It doesn't matter whether you are an engineer trying to learn how to communicate better with your spouse or a marijuana user trying to stop smoking, the reality of our human condition is that it is difficult to make changes that last over time.

Change is hard and can be messy at first. Many of us feel like we are living Groundhog Day over and over again and are stuck in patterns of behavior that are incredibly difficult to break.

For many, our failure to change behavior only leads to complacency and frustration over time. In order to disconnect from these negative cycles and to create lasting changes in behavior we must first understand the barriers that keep us from maintaining positive changes over time.

Fully understanding and anticipating your barriers and blocks to behavior change is the first step to creating the healthy life you want to live. While everyone has unique barriers to their own change, there are some common strategies we can implement that will ensure we proactively and intentionally break through barriers that are holding us back.

Address procrastination

Many times the biggest blocks to our change is procrastination. It's not that we don't have very real intentions to change or that we don't even know the steps that would be involved in making

the change, it's simply that we avoid starting.

One trick that helps many people stop procrastinating is to focus on the timing of when we decide to start.

Change always feels more natural and manageable when it is congruent with the narrative we are building about our life.

For instance, change seems more manageable and exciting around New Year's Day doesn't it?

That's because the new year feels like a new chapter, and that is how we organize our life.

When you begin to plan out the changes you want to make, look for the built-in resets that you can easily identify as a result of the start of a different stage or chapter.

Start working out on a Monday because it's the beginning of the week, rather than on a Thursday or a Friday.

Look for holidays that you can use as a reset that might indicate the beginning of a new season.

Don't worry if you can't find an impending holiday to plan your life around, it's more about the meaning we attach to any given day we are going to use as a reset to jumpstart our change process.

The meaning you assign to any start date is either going to encourage or discourage you to actually follow through with the change.

Harness the power of your own laziness

Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania have developed the clever idea of harnessing the power of laziness to help people begin and follow through with a change process.

This strategy follows a fairly simple logic: as humans we want to be comfortable and avoid negative emotions like boredom, stress and pain.

In fact, most people avoid spending any extra effort and will instead prefer

what the researchers called "default options."

Default options are what we end up with if we do absolutely nothing.

The default option on my iPhone is the Safari web browser.

My tendency, and the tendency of most people that use iPhones, is to use Safari as their web browser.

Now let's be clear, I do not use Safari because it's the best option. No, no, no, that would mean I was actually being intentional.

I use Safari because it's easy, it happens automatically and I don't have to expend any extra effort.

Basically, I'm avoiding the added stress and drama of taking five minutes to pick the web browser that best fits my needs.

I know, it's strange, but I challenge you to think about your life and how often you use the default option to make decisions about your behavior.

If we're going to be proactive and intentional about making changes in our life, we can start by setting healthy defaults.

If one of your behavior-change goals includes being more informed about current events, make sure your default setting is consistent with your goals.

What is your default drink at dinner, a glass of wine or water?

If you want to make sure you drink less alcohol, make sure that your default beverage at dinner is water.

In short, we can leverage our own laziness to set ourselves up for success with behavior change.

Change within the context of relationships

It should come as no surprise that we all need healthy relationships in order to maintain our change over time.

Relationships are vitally important for a couple different reasons.

For starters, other people can provide much-needed accountability for us as

we attempt to make and sustain changes.

The most basic behavioral principles demonstrate that the more a behavior costs us relationally, financially or physically, the less likely the behavior is to happen.

If you want to make positive changes that stick, find truth tellers that won't hesitate to tell you the things you don't want to hear.

Another reason relationships are so essential for getting unstuck is based on the principle of modeling.

Many times we only know what we're capable of when we look around and see other people who are living the kind of life we want to live.

At the end of the day the most life-giving relationships that we can be a part of are the ones that inspire us to actually live in our calling.

That's why people who are serious about change find groups of people that are living the change that they would like to see.

Think in terms of the alcoholic who is inspired by his AA sponsor who has spent 20 years sober or the business owner who connects with a mentor who inspires him to grow his business.

If you're ready to get unstuck in your life, surround yourself with people who inspire you. Spend time around them and model their behavior.

Change is hard and it can be messy and uncomfortable, but with the right tools and support it is not impossible.

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