

News

Benefits of fish oil in diet now linked to weight loss

PETA RASDIEN

Losing weight just got easier with research out yesterday showing people who swallow fish oil as part of an exercise regime shed the kilos faster.

An Adelaide study has found overweight people on a modest exercise plan lose more weight if they also take daily doses of tuna oil rich in omega 3 fatty acids.

Omega 3 has already been linked to many health benefits, including improving children's co-ordination, language and behaviour, reducing the risk of heart disease, dementia and depression and relieving symp-

toms of rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis and auto-immune disease.

The University of South Australia study, presented at a fatty acids and lipids conference in Cairns yesterday, involved the overweight or obese with cardiovascular problems such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol. Participants did not alter their diet but took regular doses of either tuna fish oil or sunflower oil, which has no omega 3.

After three months of light exercise — a 45-minute walk or run three times a week — those consuming fish oil had lost an average of two kilograms.

Those who took sunflower

oil, as well as other groups who took either oil without exercising, lost no weight.

Researcher Alison Hill said the results were surprising given people were still eating whatever they wanted. "It's pretty exciting because this implies the results would be even better if you did control diet and exercised more," she said.

Scientists are still unsure exactly how omega 3 works but they believe it may improve a person's ability to burn fat.

Nutritionist Glenn Cardwell said the findings provided another good reason for people to include fish in their diets.

But GP and anti-ageing specialist Joe Kosterich said people should not think they could pop a few fish oil tablets for weight loss.

Losing weight could be achieved only through a calorie-controlled diet and exercise.

Dr Kosterich said for too long people had been scared of taking all fats for fear of gaining weight, but the truth was there were fats essential to good health, such as omega 3, which could be obtained only through diet.

Research has shown most people get less than 200mg a day of omega 3 — well under the 500mg a day recommended to help prevent heart disease.