

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

Key to testing: CL = Consumerlab: www.consumerlab.com; NN = Nordic Naturals claims third-party testing with certificates of analysis available; USP = USP Dietary Supplements Verification Program: <https://www.quality-supplements.org/Verification>

Tufts HeartSmart website: A website for owners of dogs and cats with heart disease <https://heartsmart.vet.tufts.edu/>