

Evaluation of omega-3 screening program

It is important to assess how many women have low omega-3 levels and how many babies were born early to see if screening has reduced the number of premature births in South Australia. We will electronically link the omega-3 test results with birth data in a secure way, without identifying you or your baby in any way. You may decline to have your data linked without affecting you or your baby's care.

Opting out: If you do not want your data included in the statewide evaluation of the screening program, please telephone (08) 8128 4444 or email omega3@sahmri.com.

The evaluation has been approved by the Women's and Children's Health Network (WCHN) Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC/20/WCHN/138). Should you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, you may contact the executive secretary of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Mr Luke Fraser, WCHN (08) 8161 6521.

Further Information

 sahmri.org/omega3

 Speak to your doctor or midwife



If you would like further information about the evaluation of the omega-3 screening program, please contact

 omega3@sahmri.com

 (08) 8128 4444



Omega-3 screening to help prevent premature births

 Information for families



SA Pathology and the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) are evaluating the effectiveness of omega-3 screening for pregnant women from 2021 to reduce the number of babies born prematurely.

? Why Omega-3 Screening?

Omega-3 fats are nutrients commonly found in fish and algae. The right amount of omega-3 in your body during pregnancy can help you have a full-term pregnancy. Babies born too soon (premature), particularly those born before 34 weeks of pregnancy, may have lengthy stays in hospital and may experience long-term health problems and delays in development.

Women expecting one baby who have low omega-3 levels in their blood are at higher risk of having their baby born prematurely. They are most likely to benefit from omega-3 supplements. Women who have sufficient omega-3 levels are already at lower risk of having a premature baby and so should not take additional omega-3 supplements.

Screening for omega-3 levels before 20 weeks of pregnancy will identify women who require omega-3 supplements and those who will not.

We do not yet have a screening test for women expecting twins or triplets.

💧 Blood collection

Your health professional will give you the SA Maternal Serum Antenatal Screening (SAMSAS) request form to take to a blood collection centre. Your omega-3 level will be measured using the blood collected for the SAMSAS program. The test is provided free to families.



Omega-3 Results

Your health professional will discuss your omega-3 test results with you.

Omega-3 test result	Health professional advice
Less than 3.7%	<p>If you have a low omega-3 level (less than 3.7%), your health professional will recommend you take omega-3 supplements (fish oil or algal oil) to reduce your risk of a premature birth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can take supplements after receiving omega-3 results up until 37 weeks of pregnancy. The suggested dose is 800 mg of DHA and 100 mg of EPA every day. Omega-3 supplements you can take include: Infantem* (Pharmamark) and Omega Brain (Blackmores). <p>PLEASE NOTE: If you are already on prescription medication to stop your blood clotting (like heparin), speak with your doctor before taking omega-3 supplements.</p>
Between 3.7 and 4.3%	<p>If you have a moderate omega-3 level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You do not need to do anything different from what you usually do. If you are already taking omega-3 fatty acids as part of a multivitamin and mineral supplement or an omega-3 supplement, you can continue to do so.
Above 4.3%	<p>If you have a sufficient omega-3 level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your risk of a premature birth is low and additional omega-3 supplements may increase this risk. Your health professional will advise that you stop taking any omega-3 supplements.

*Algal oil supplement of DHA and EPA.