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What is an Omega 3 essential fatty acid?

To properly understand what essential fatty acid (EFA) nutrients are it is necessary to understand the scientific meaning of three terms - essential, fatty acid, and nutrient.

Essential: If something is classified as essential in nutritional or biochemical terms it means that the body cannot make it and must therefore receive it from the diet.

Fatty Acid: A fatty acid is simply a type of fat that is classified according to its structure and biological function. Fat has gotten a bad rap over the last few decades and this topic deserves some clarification. I like to classify fats as good, bad, and ugly. The good fats, the fats that are absolutely essential for health and protection from illnesses are the EFAs. The bad fats, the fats that when overconsumed can lead to heart disease, obesity, and other illnesses are the saturated fats from farm raised animals that are fed omega 6 grains such as corn and soy. The ugly fats are the unnatural human made fats such as trans fats and hydrogenated fats. These fats are literally toxic. Sadly they are found in almost all junk foods and even a lot of 'health' foods.

If you are buying a packaged food read the label and check for trans, hydrogenated, or partially hydrogenated or fractionated fat or oil. If you see this put the product back on the shelf!! In fact, these fats are so toxic that the Canadian government is making them illegal; other countries will surely follow as will lawsuits against the companies who put them in their products.

Nutrient: A nutrient is something that the cells of the body require in order to function properly, express health and avoid sickness. You are probably familiar with nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, fats, carbohydrates and proteins.

Essential Fatty Acid Nutrient: An essential fatty acid (EFA) nutrient, in scientific terms, is a nutrient required for health and protection from sickness that the cells of the body cannot produce or make; it is a nutrient that must be derived from our diet. Without these essential nutrients proper health is impossible and illness is inevitable - they are literally that important in terms of determining quality and quantity of life.