

Omega-3s provide no benefits against bronchopulmonary dysplasia in very preterm infants

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Consumption of DHA supplements, an omega-3 fatty acid, by breastfeeding mothers is ineffective in preventing bronchopulmonary dysplasia in preterm infants born before the 29th week of pregnancy. This is the main conclusion of a Canada-wide study published today in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*.

"Bronchopulmonary dysplasia is a chronic inflammatory lung disease that affects half of [preterm infants](#), causing significant breathing difficulties that can make them become dependent on ventilators and oxygen for months," explained the study's lead author, Dr. Isabelle Marc, pediatrician, professor at the Université Laval Faculty of Medicine and researcher at the CHU de Québec-Université Laval Research Centre. "Babies with [bronchopulmonary dysplasia](#) are at greater risk for neurodevelopmental disabilities, respiratory issues, and, in rare cases, death."

The study was conducted with the help of 461 women who had recently given birth before their 29th week of pregnancy. The participants, all of whom were breastfeeding their child, were randomly divided into two groups: one group taking a daily supplement containing 1.2 g of DHA and the other taking a placebo pill.

"By the time they reached 36 weeks of development, we found no improvement in the respiratory condition of preemies whose mother had

taken DHA supplements," said Dr. Marc. "Having mothers take DHA supplements during the newborn period to prevent bronchopulmonary dysplasia in their very preterm infants cannot be recommended at this point," added the study's last author, Dr. Pascal Lavoie, who is a researcher at BC Children's Hospital, a neonatologist at BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre and an associate professor at the University of British Columbia Faculty of Medicine. "It would be preferable for mothers to get these omega-3s by eating a [balanced diet](#) containing fish and other foods rich in omega-3s," concluded Dr. Marc.

The researchers will continue monitoring the children until they are 18 months old in order to determine whether omega-3s have positive effects on brain development in very preterm infants.

More information: *Journal of the American Medical Association* (2020). [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2020.8896](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2020.8896)

Provided by Laval University

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