

LISTENING 4

The importance of what we eat

1. How many years ago our diet used to consist of roughly equal amounts of omega 3 and omega 6?
 - a) 10
 - b) 100
 - c) 1000
2. Now we're eating ...
 - a) less omega 3 and more omega 6.
 - b) equal amounts of omega 3 and omega 6.
 - c) more omega 3 and less omega 6.
3. Which group of people eat definitely too little omega 3 and too much omega 6?
 - a) adults
 - b) teenagers
 - c) children
4. Children's favourite food is ...
 - a) chocolate
 - b) chips
 - c) fruit
5. A study on over a thousand children showed that
 - a) Children don't like eating chips.
 - b) All children eat a vegetable or a piece of fruit each day.
 - c) 86% had not eaten fish.
6. What improves a child's ability to concentrate?
 - a) fish oil
 - b) fruits
 - c) palm oil
7. What were children taking for 6 months?
 - a) half of them took a supplement containing omega 3 and the second half placebo from palm oil
 - b) a supplement containing omega 3
 - c) a placebo made from palm oil
8. Mathew paid more attention at class and described himself as being ...
 - a) the same.
 - b) sleepy
 - c) very different

The importance of what we eat **key**

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5. A study on over a thousand children showed that
 - a) Children don't like eating chips.
 - b) All children eat a vegetable or a piece of fruit each day.
 - c) 86% had not eaten fish.
6. What transforms a child's reading ability?
 - a) fish oil
 - b) fruits
 - c) sweets
7. What were children taking for 6 months?
 - a) half of them took supplement containing omega 3 and the second half placebo from palm oil
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Tapescript

A hundred years ago our diet used to consist of roughly equal amounts of omega 3 and omega 6. Now we are eating less omega 3 and about a thousand times more omega 6. One group of people who rarely eat enough omega 3 and have too much omega 6 are children.

A study on what over a thousand children ate in a day showed that 40 % had chips at lunchtime, more than half hadn't eaten a vegetable or a piece of fruit for 24 hours, and the majority had eaten something sweet. Nearly all 86% had not eaten fish. If having a balanced diet is so important, could high amounts of omega 3 re-address this imbalance and boost brain function?

"I find it hard to believe that taking fish oil will suddenly transform a child's reading ability. I can understand that deprivation of fatty acids during a critical period of brain development may have a lasting effect but once the brain is formed, it really hangs onto its fatty acids. I think it's very unlikely that one would see an improvement of behaviour. There is no proper physiological basis to expect such a change to occur"

To find out whether omega 3 could benefit normal school children, Dr Madeleine Portwood from Durham LEA carried out a trial on nearly three hundred children. She assessed the children's reading, writing and ability to concentrate. The trial lasted for six months. Half the children took a supplement containing omega 3, and the other half had a fishy tasting placebo made from palm oil. No one knew which child had which supplement. When Madeleine re-assessed them, she observed that the children who had taken omega 3, like Matthew, paid more attention in class.

DR MADELEINE PORTWOOD - Yeah well spotted, because you struggled with that last time. If you think what you were like before you started taking the capsules, what were you doing in school?

MATTHEW - Well, I wasn't like getting much work finished.

DR MADELEINE PORTWOOD - And is that any different now?

MATTHEW - Yeah.

DR MADELEINE PORTWOOD - So you like doing your work?

MATTHEW - I just want to get it all finished, all my thinking's just like popping into my head.

DR MADELEINE PORTWOOD - What sort of things pop into your head?

MATTHEW - Like good ideas of what I could do

DR MADELEINE PORTWOOD - Before the trial started, Matthew described himself as a child who had problems concentrating, didn't finish his work and was generally in trouble most of the time. That was in school and at home. Since he's been taking supplements, he describes himself as being very different. He's able to finish work, his concentration has improved, his attention to detail is greater, and certainly we've seen improvements in his reading and spelling abilities.