

School's DIY trial supports omega 3

A principal's TV-inspired initiative may show fatty acid improves basic skills

by Craig Borley
health reporter

It's not overly scientific, and the sample is small, but early results are in on New Zealand's first classroom-based experiment on the benefits of omega 3.

And those initial results are good, Wellsford School principal Paul Whitaker said yesterday.

Mr Whitaker came up with the idea of giving some of his students omega 3 after watching a BBC documentary that involved a similar experiment.

He contacted North Shore-based natural health products firm Good Health, which agreed to supply the school with omega 3 tablets, and began the experiment on September 10.

Twenty-one of Wellsford School pupils, aged between 11 and 12, took omega 3 tablets once a day for the first two months, continuing to take them twice a day for two months.

Another student group of the same size and roughly the same demographic makeup are serving as the control group — not taking the tablets but engaging in the same lessons.

The two groups are to be tested on a range of disciplines, undergoing a series of basic timed addition, subtraction, division and multiplication tests.

They will also sit nationally approved spelling and reading tests.

The first of the tests, focused on writing, was completed yesterday.

The control group's writing had stayed at the level they should have.

But the children taking omega 3 have shown a definite improvement in writing and general focus, Mr

CHEWING THE FAT

- Omega 3 is an unsaturated fatty acid.
- It's commonly found in oily fish including salmon, anchovies and sardines.
- Vegetable sources include pumpkin seeds, flax seeds, and walnuts.
- Studies suggest a diet rich in omega 3 can reduce the risk of heart disease. It may also cut the risk of prostate and skin cancer and improve behaviour in antisocial teenagers.
- Omega 3 has "qualified health claim" status with the US Food and Drug Administration.

Whitaker said. That was in line with his expectations that the children taking omega 3 would have higher motivation, more concentration and improved overall basic skills.

Mr Whitaker said the pupils were excited about the trial, and the school had the full support of their parents.

Good Health chief executive Paul O'Brien said he hoped the trial would prompt more formal trials in New Zealand to test if omega 3 did genuinely improve the wellbeing of children.

Results suggested it did, he said.

"Ironically, omega 3 was routinely dispensed years ago in the form of the dreaded teaspoon of cod liver oil.

"Fortunately, the consumption of omega 3 is now much less despised with the introduction of capsules."


goodhealth
NATURALLY NEW ZEALAND

Good Health Omega 3 was used in the Wellsford school trial.

As
seen
on TV.

New Zealand Herald,
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