

# An Interview with Dr. Artemis Simopoulos and The Super Omega Plan for Fantastic Health

Artemis P. Simopoulos, M.D., an international authority on essential fatty acids, is creator of The Omega Plan diet—a breakthrough program that allows people to eat normal amounts of fat, yet is guaranteed to transform their health, dramatically reducing their risk for cancer, heart disease, obesity, diabetes, arthritis, asthma—and many other so-called modern ailments.

In her book *The Omega Plan* (HarperCollins, 1998), Dr. Simopoulos offers delicious menu options, allowing you to eat real salad dressings, mayonnaise, cheese, and the occasional chocolate dessert—absolutely guilt free! The bottom line is that you will be healthier on this program than if you were to eat nothing but steamed vegetables, rich, and tofu. You will happily stay on this diet for life, and you won't gain weight.



*What is The Omega Plan and why is it so important to our health?*

The Omega Plan is a diet that restores to the human body the proper balance of essential fatty acids so lacking in today's modern diet. Unwittingly, we've allowed the food industry to make technological changes to our food supply without understanding the biological consequences. The net result is that our diet is so different from the natural human diet, the diet on which our species evolved, that it is at odds with our genetic makeup, increasing our risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, obesity, and immune disorders. The Omega Plan, as detailed in my book helps to restore a healthy balance of essential nutrients to the diet.

*What led you to explore the link between diet and health—especially the rise of heart disease and cancer and the modern Western diet.*

I was fortunate in that I grew up eating a diet very similar to The Omega Plan. I was born in Greece, and my mother made a great effort to give us fresh, wholesome food, a task made easier by the fact that within our large estate were chickens, goats, sheep, and hundreds of trees that gave us olives, pears, figs, plums and pomegranates. The mild climate allowed fruits and vegetables to grow year round. I was in for a rude shock when I came to the United States in 1949 to study chemistry at Barnard College.

The stark contrast between the Western diet of the 1950s and the traditional Greek diet made such an impression on me that it helped shape my entire medical career. When I went to medical school and specialized in pediatrics, I began to realize that many of the children with serious diseases had been malnourished in the womb. This unfortunate start was made worse by the types of food eaten in the home—refined foods, lots of saturated fat and sugar, very few fatty acids. This observation made me interested in the interplay between genetics and nutrition as well. Which types of foods were ideally suited for a child's genetic background? How could diet help compensate for genetic defects? I wrote *The Omega Plan* with the hope that it would empower people to make healthier food choices, greatly increasing their chances of enjoying lifelong positive health.

*What is the biggest food myth today?*

Well, certainly one is that you have to give up fat to lose weight and enjoy better health. Most weight-loss diets and so-called healthy diets throw out the good fat with the bad fat, leaving people with dry, lackluster food. Very few people are able to stay on such diets, resulting in a sense of frustration and failure. The Omega Plan teaches us that we can replace harmful fats with beneficial fats, allowing people eat from 30 to 35 percent of their calories as fat—absolutely free of guilt! And, no, you won't gain weight.

*What you're saying, you must realize, runs completely counter to conventional thinking on the fat issue. Most people believe all fat is the enemy of great health. But, you're saying that fat per se is not the enemy—only certain types of fat. This leads us to ask, What is meant by "bad" fats and "good" fats?*

One type of fat that predominates in the American diet—saturated fat—has lived up to its reputation of being a "bad" fat. Found in factory farmed meat and dairy and some tropical oils, saturated fat increase one's risk of coronary artery disease, diabetes, and obesity. Recently, another culprit has been identified—"trans-fatty" acids, human made molecules that are produced during the hydrogenation of vegetable oils. Now studies show that trans-fatty acids can be even worse for your cardiovascular system than saturated fat and may also increase the risk of breast cancer. Switching from butter to margarine was not such a good idea after all. These are the bad fats.



*What, then, are the "good" fats?*

For the Western diet, perhaps the most important type of fat to increase your intake of is omega-3 fatty acids, which are found in seafood, green leafy vegetables, flax, and walnuts. When the proper amount of omega-3 fatty acids are not consumed, people are

at much greater risk for most of the major killer diseases afflicting humankind today, including heart attack, stroke, cancer, obesity, insulin resistance, diabetes, asthma, arthritis, lupus, and even depression. Conversely, in epidemiological and clinical studies, people who consume optimal amounts of omega-3 fatty acids tend to have lower rates of cancer and heart disease—even though their fat consumption is about the same as in the West.

*Why is it so difficult to consume adequate amounts of the omega-3 fatty acids?*

Let me give you an example. Our modern factory farming methods have changed this composition of foods, markedly reducing their omega-3 fatty acid content. For example, the flesh or eggs of free range animals that consume a natural foraging diet are far richer in omega-3 fatty acids than animals kept in confinement and fed an artificial, grain-based diet. In fact, each produces an altogether food! It has been estimated that we are now eating one-tenth of the amount of omega-3 fatty acids required for normal functioning. Alarming, 20 percent of the population has levels so low that they defy detection. This is purely the result of poor diet choices and the changing nature of our modern food supply.

### **The 7 guidelines by dr. Simopoulos**

- First, enrich your diet with omega-3 fatty acids with cold-water fish, flax, and walnut oil.
- Use canola, olive and flax oils as your primary oils.
- Eat seven more or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Eat more peas, beans, and nuts.
- Eat less saturated fat and cholesterol.
- Avoid oils high in omega-6 fatty acids, such as corn, safflower, peanut, soybean, sunflower and cottonseed oils.
- Avoid products made from these oils.
- Avoid trans-fatty acids.

*Is The Omega Plan medically proven?*

The Omega Plan has been tested with a markedly lower risk for heart disease in the Lyon Diet Heart Study which was both randomized and blinded. Many other epidemiological and experimental studies confirm that The Omega Plan works to reduce disease and maintain healthy weight.

*What would be a safe daily source for the omega-3 fatty acids—but without pollution worries?*

Oh, that's easy. The two major sources of omega-3 fatty acids are fish oils and flax, the most concentrated plant source. By eating flaxseed or taking flax seed oil, you can easily consume adequate amounts of omega-3 fatty acids.

*Would you agree with our recommendation that Barlean's Lignan-rich Flax Oil (Flax Oil, Omega Twin, Essential Woman) is one of the best sources today for flax oil?*

Yes. I've used Barlean's and I think it is very good.



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