PLACE/INSTIUTION:	Department of Pediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynecology and Biochemistry, The University of Tennessee, Memphis, Tennessee
TARGET SAMPLE:	59 preterm infants

Early supplementation of preterm infants with DHA supports mental and visual function

SUMMARY

The omega-3 fatty acid, DHA is considered an essential fatty acid for the fetus and newborn. DHA is found in high amounts in brain cells and in the retina of the eye (the part of the eye which response to light) and is thought to be vital for normal brain and vision function. There is a large increase in the brain content of this fatty acid during the rapid brain growth in last three months of pregnancy however preterm infants miss out on this DHA 'boost'. 59 preterm infants were given either standard infant formula (with no DHA) or a marine oil-enriched infant formula providing 0.2% of fats as DHA for 2 months following birth. When the infants reached 12 months of age they underwent visual attention testing, this testing measures how quickly infants can process visual information and encompasses both vision and mental processing. It was found that infants who had been supplemented with DHA following birth were able to process visual information faster than those who did not receive DHA.

CONCLUSION

Supplementation of preterm infants with DHA in the first 2 months following birth supports mental development and increases information processing speed at 12 months of age.

REFERENCE:

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A randomized trial of visual attention of preterm infants fed docosahexaenoic acid until two months. Carlson SE, Werkman SH.