

Omega-3 may cut admissions for heart failure

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A single omega-3 fish oil capsule taken daily could help keep some people with heart failure out of hospital, a study released yesterday revealed.

A second trial, however, found that statins - conventional medicines prescribed for many healthy people with high cholesterol at risk of heart disease - have no effect once the arteries have narrowed to the point where heart failure occurs.

Both results were revealed yesterday in Munich at the European Society of Cardiology meeting and published online by the Lancet. Italian researchers investigated the potential of omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids on patients with chronic heart failure - which occurs when the heart struggles to pump blood around the body because of narrowing arteries.

Professors Luigi Tavazzi and Gianni Tognoni from the ANMCO research centre in Florence found that more patients who were given the omega-3 survived than those who received a placebo. In the omega-3 group, 955 died (27%), whereas among those given a placebo, 1,014 (29%) died. More in the placebo group were also admitted to hospital. Experts said the difference was enough to recommend omega-3 for patients with heart failure.

Statins did not prove useful in a trial where 2,285 patients were given 10mg a day of rosuvastatin while 2,289 received a placebo. The researchers found there was no significant difference between deaths and hospital admissions.