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Omega 3 food

Reporter: Vassil Malandris

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Wholemeal, wholegrain, low fat, high fibre, soy, selenium and of course the big buzz word, omega 3. It seems choosing a healthy loaf of bread these days is about everything but the bread.

Last year in the United States alone, food companies raked in seven billion dollars from omega 3 boosted products and the trend is catching on here.

We found it in some breakfast cereals and also in breads, muffins, crackers and also burritos, tortillas, fruit straps, cereals, pastas, milks, yoghurts, drinks and eggs.

But are we being conned into paying too much for something which may not even cover our recommended intake?

Adelaide dietician Caron Milham's research surveyed the price of dozens of grocery items with and without the omega 3.

"I think it's justified to have a little increase in price if a food does have extra benefits but if there is a huge increase in price with not too much more nutritional benefits than a comparable product you need to be able to ascertain that."

We found some products yesterday were almost double the price than other products.

Yet some of the omega 3 boosted products were smaller in size than their non-fortified counterparts and with only about 30 mg of fish oil per serve on average, Caron argues we are still falling well short of our daily dietary requirements.

"400 mg for women and 600 mg per day for men these levels have shown to have an impact in preventing chronic disease. Most of us don't get anywhere near that amount."

However if you study the fish oil content rather than just get dazzled by the labels just you can achieve an effective daily omega 3 intake by including a combination of these fortified products in your diet.

Adelaide father of 3 Phil O'Reardon, a self confessed meat and three veg man, decided to take the omega 3 challenge with Caron, replacing all his standard groceries with omega 3 equivalents without breaking the budget.

All up Phil and Caron managed to fill the trolley with enough omega 3 boosted products to meet his family's needs.

"This is all very well and good but is there anything that we can have as a treat - big kids and little kids?"

"Bit of a chip eater?"

"Yeah love them!"

"Well there's even some now with omega 3. Four percent fat so they're not too bad for the waistline either."

"Men really need 4 slices of omega 3 fortified bread, 2 omega 3 fortified eggs, 210g spaghetti, a few teaspoons of margarine etc."

The facts are omega 3 is good for the body, the right omega 3 in the right

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volume. It isn't necessarily that case in the products that are sold and marketed to the consumers.

Marketing guru Barry Urquhart says with so many promises of added health benefits, we shouldn't believe everything we see in the supermarket aisles.

"I think what it shows is that people are very sensitive to wanting to feel good and well and are driven by the emotion rather than the rationality and the economics of the situation."

And he says with the average grocery bill up by nearly 7% from last year, it's even more reason to take the time to make informed decisions.

"The regulation authority can't rely on consumers to read labels, most consumers don't. They see the headline omega 3 added and they buy it believing someone will be looking after their well being. They may be being sold short."

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