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## Fish intake can help pregnant women improve their progeny's intelligence

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Blood samples were collected from 2,000 women at 20 gestational weeks and from the umbilical cord of the infant at birth

### Can pregnant women improve their progeny's intelligence by eating fish?

Can pregnant women improve their progeny's intelligence by eating fish? A study recently submitted to the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* and coordinated by the University of Granada professor Cristina Campoy Folgoso revealed that infants born to mothers who consumed more fish during pregnancy were higher in verbal intelligence and fine motor skill tests, and present an increased prosocial behavior.

This study was conducted within the framework of the NUTRIMENTHE project ("Effect of diet on cognitive development"), which received funding of 5.9 million Euros from the European 7th Framework Programme (7PM). This study was coordinated by the University of Granada professor Cristina Campoy Folgoso. Fish oil is the primary source of long-chain Omega-3 fatty acids as docosahexaenoic acid, the main component of brain cell membranes. The European Commission has confirmed and supports the healthy effects of DHA as "it contributes to the normal development of the brain and eye of the fetus and of breastfed infants".

### Effects of Fish Intake

The NUTRIMENTHE project is focused on the effects that genetic variants and maternal fish intake have on the offspring's intellectual capacity. The researchers mainly focused on polymorphisms in the fatty acid desaturase (FADS) gene cluster that encodes the delta-5 and delta-6 desaturase enzymes involved in the synthesis of long-chain fatty acids of the series omega-3 and omega-6.

The researchers collected blood samples from 2 000 women at 20 gestational weeks and from the umbilical cord of the infant at birth, and analyzed concentrations of long-chain fatty acids of the series omega-3 and omega-6. Then, they determined the genotype of 18 polymorphisms in the FADS gene cluster. The aim of this study was to assess the effects of maternal fish intake -as a source of Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids- on fetal development, and to determine how the different genotypes affect long-chain fatty acid concentrations in the fetus.

Dr. Pauline Emmett (University of Bristol), Dr. Eva Lattka (Helmholtz Zentrum München, the German Research Center for Environmental Health) and their research teams have determined how FADS gene polymorphisms affect long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acid concentrations in women during pregnancy.

### Maternal Genotypes

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