DHA and ARA in early life: key scientific facts

Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and arachidonic acid (ARA) are the primary long chain omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids (LCPUFAs), found naturally in breast milk.

Both are well known to support infant health during the first year of life

This period represents a unique window of opportunity, where nutrition can help shape a healthy future.

Did you know?

Recent findings suggest DHA and ARA have positive effects on a child’s development when provided together and in efficacious levels during infancy, supporting:

- Brain and cognitive development
- Mental adaptability and problem solving
- Visual development
- Attention and information processing
- A healthy immune system

ARA may additionally support bone formation, blood flow and blood vessel function.

Effects of DHA and ARA intake during the first year of life are observed to last through to nine years of age.

However, DHA and ARA intakes across both developed and developing countries decrease during weaning, as complementary weaning foods are often a poor source of these key fatty acids.

Infants that receive sufficient intake of DHA and ARA are setting a foundation for a healthy life as these key fatty acids support healthy growth and development, helping to safeguard their future.

Learn more about the importance of DHA and ARA during early life.