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 future¹



Did you know?

LCPUFAs, including **DHA** and **ARA**, are amongst the most researched nutrients in the world



DHA is the main omega-3 fatty acid in the brain, representing **97%** of the total omega-3 fats there²

ARA is the primary omega-6 fatty acid in the brain, 48% of the omega-6 fats there³

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^{4,5,6,7} Mental adaptability and problem solving⁸ Visual development⁹ Attention and information processing¹⁰ A healthy immune system¹¹

ARA may additionally support bone formation, blood flow and blood vessel function¹²

Effects of **DHA** and **ARA** intake during the first year of life are observed to last through to nine years of age¹³

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 acids¹⁴

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 future¹⁵

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



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