



## DO IT OR DON'T?

# Fats that make you think faster

They're said to help kids behave and get students through their exams, but will essential fatty acids fire your brain cells? eve goes back to school with Professor Basant Puri of Hammersmith Hospital and Imperial College, London.

**What's in it for me?** 'Essential fatty acids (EFAs) can hugely enhance brain function, concentration and memory – two-thirds of your brain is made up of fats, after all. They can reduce your chances of depression, heart attack, stroke and joint problems, and even help you sleep better.'

**Hurrah! Where do I find them?** 'The most important groups are omega-3 and omega-6 long-chain fatty acids. You'll find omega-3s in oily fish, walnuts, spinach, organic milk and dairy products from cows fed on grass all year around. Omega-6s are in nuts, seeds (vegetable oils) and evening primrose oil. There are lots of confusing initials but basically EPA and DHA are omega-3s and GLA is an omega-6.'



The body doesn't make any of them so you need to get them in the diet or from supplements.'

**Aren't fish full of toxins though?** 'Good point. Pollution means fish can end up full of dioxins, PCBs and heavy metals, which can be harmful to health. That's why the government recommends women of child-bearing age should limit their intake to two portions a week. Older women and men can eat up to four.'

**OK, so what's going to help me think faster and how?** 'I use a supplement that contains EPA, plus virgin evening primrose oil, like VegEPA. Brain scans show that a thirtysomething woman's brain actually grows in size after taking it for as little as three months.'

**But I'm pregnant...** 'Don't take supplements, but make sure you get EPAs in your diet. We scanned a number of women before and during pregnancy and in every normal pregnancy, the mother's brain shrank. Women tell us they find it hard to "think straight" when pregnant, and we know the baby needs EFAs – we think they scavenge them from the mother.'

**And can EFAs really help kids at school?** 'Yes. Research shows that giving children a supplement is associated with a significant improvement in concentration and handwriting.'

