

The seAFood Trial

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for participating in the seAFood Trial between 2011 and 2016. The results have now been published in one of the world's leading scientific journals called The Lancet and it is now a pleasure to be able to share the findings with you. Please click the link below to access the Lancet Paper.

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)31775-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)31775-6/fulltext)

Why was a trial needed?

A polyp, also known as an adenoma, is a fleshy growth on the wall of the large bowel (also called the colon). A proportion (estimated to be 1 in 20) of polyps may turn into bowel (colon) cancer over a 5-10 year period. We know that removal of polyps reduces the chance of developing bowel cancer in the future. An alternative approach is to stop polyps growing in the first place by using medicines or nutritional supplements. In the seAFood Trial, we tested a natural omega-3 called EPA, which is present in fish oil, and the medicine aspirin.

What did the Trial involve?

You were suitable for the trial because you had at least three polyps removed at your Bowel Cancer Screening Programme lower bowel camera test (colonoscopy). This meant that you needed a check-up colonoscopy one year later. During that year, you were asked to take either four or five capsules, as well as a tablet every day. The trial medication either contained active ingredients or was a dummy capsule/tablet (a placebo). You had an equal chance of receiving one of four treatments:

- Group 1 – EPA capsules and an aspirin tablet
- Group 2 – placebo capsules and an aspirin tablet
- Group 3 – EPA capsules and a placebo tablet
- Group 4 – placebo capsules and a placebo tablet

To see if taking the trial medication had any effect on bowel polyp growth, we counted the number of bowel polyps that were found at your check-up colonoscopy and compared all the results between the four treatment groups.

TRIAL FACTS

709 patients joined the trial.

53 endoscopy units took part across England.

What did we find?

Did taking EPA or aspirin reduce growth of bowel polyps?

There was no difference in the number of patients who had at least one polyp found at check-up (approximately 60%) across all the four treatment groups. However, both EPA and aspirin use were associated with a 10-20% reduction in the number of certain types of polyp and showed different effects in different parts of the bowel. Aspirin use was associated with a reduction in polyps throughout the colon, including the right side of the colon (the part furthest from the anus or back passage) where polyps and cancers are most often missed at colonoscopy. EPA seemed to work against polyps in the left side of the colon (the part nearest the back passage) only.

Were EPA and aspirin safe to use?

Both EPA and aspirin treatment were safe. In the past, there has been some concern that aspirin (and to a lesser extent EPA) can cause bleeding but we did not see this in the seAFOod Trial. Use of EPA on its own caused about 10% more mild abdominal symptoms like diarrhoea. An interesting finding was that combined use of aspirin with EPA seemed to protect against those side-effects

What are the implications of the trial for prevention of bowel cancer?

From work by others, we believe that the 10-20% reduction in polyp number that we saw will lead to a lower chance of bowel cancer. The trial adds to the evidence that aspirin might prevent right-sided bowel cancer, which is precisely the type of bowel cancer that occurs most frequently despite colonoscopy check-ups. EPA had a smaller effect on polyp risk, which was only evident in one particular type of polyp. There was a suggestion that EPA and aspirin together might be more powerful but this needs further testing. A 'personalised' approach to prevention will be required so that the right medicine or nutrient (or combination) is used in people most at risk of developing different types of polyp and bowel cancer.

What do I do if I want to learn more about the trial results?

If you wish to read the full scientific article, it is available 'open access' which means that it is accessible to all, not just to subscribers to the scientific journal. Please use the link to download the article or contact your local research team for a copy.

Can I find out what treatment I had now the trial has ended?

Yes, please contact your local hospital research team for further details

A big 'THANK YOU'

Finally, on behalf of all the seAFOod Trial team, we would like to thank you again for taking part in this important trial, which we believe will benefit bowel cancer prevention research and practice.