

## Purslane and Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Omega-3 fatty acid, or alpha-linolenic acid, is one of the two essential fatty acids needed in the human diet.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the recommended daily intake of omega-3 fatty acids is still unknown.<sup>2</sup> Omega-3 fatty acids are proven to help prevent cardiovascular disease by limiting clot formation, preventing irregular heartbeats, and lowering the risk of heart attack.<sup>3</sup> Omega-3 is also essential for normal growth and development of children. Common sources of omega-3 are canola oil, English walnuts, soybean oil, flaxseed oil, and purslane.<sup>3</sup>

Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*) is also known as pussley, Indian cress, portulaca, and verdolalga.<sup>4</sup> This plant is originally from India and Africa and became abundant in the Southwestern United States during the colonial period.<sup>4</sup> Purslane tastes similar to watercress and works well in salads. This plant can be boiled, steamed, or added to soups as a thickener.<sup>4</sup> The amount of omega-3 found in purslane can differ depending on where and how the plant is grown.<sup>5</sup> Chamber-grown purslane contained the highest amount of all the nutrients. One serving is 100 grams of fresh leaves and contains 300-400mg of omega-3 fatty acid. Purslane is also a rich source of other nutrients. One serving contains 12.2 mg alpha-tocopherol, 26.6 mg vitamin C, 1.9 mg beta carotene, and 14.8 mg glutathione.

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<sup>1</sup> de Lorgeril M, Salen P. Alpha-linolenic acid and coronary heart disease. *Nutr Metab Cardiovasc Dis*. 2004;14:162-169.

<sup>2</sup> Position Paper of the American Dietetic Association: Functional Foods. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. 1999;99(10):1278.

<sup>3</sup> Whitney EN, Rolfes SR. *Understanding Nutrition*. 9th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning; 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Onstad D. *Whole Foods Companion: A Guide for Adventurous Cooks Curious Shoppers & Lovers of Natural Foods*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing Company; 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Simopoulos AP, Norman HA, Gillaspie JE, Duke JA. Common purslane: a source of omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants. *J Am Coll Nutr*. 1992;11:374-382.