

Fat type affects kids' memory

By Dominique Patton

23/08/2005 - **The type of fat children eat is important for their performance at school, shows a new study that supports the growing number of products being fortified with omega-3 fatty acids for European children.**

[Children](#) with a higher energy intake from polyunsaturated fatty acids were more likely to have better results in the digit span test, a commonly used measure of short-term [memory](#), found US researchers.

They also report in this month's issue of the *Journal of Nutrition* (vol 135, pp1967-1973) that cholesterol intake appeared to reduce performance in the memory test.

The researchers estimated intake of different types of [fat](#) in 3,666 children aged six to 16 years old who were interviewed about their diets for the Third National Health and Nutrition Survey between 1988 and 1994.

They then assessed the children's psychosocial functioning through interviews with each child's mother. Cognitive functioning was measured using achievement and intelligence tests.

Overall, total fat and saturated fat were unrelated to measures of cognitive and psychosocial functioning.

But compared with equivalent energy intake from saturated fat or carbohydrate, each 5 per cent increase in energy intake from PUFAs was associated with lower risks of poor performance on the digit span test.

And for each 100mg intake of cholesterol, poor performance increased by 25 per cent.

The associations were independent of socioeconomic status, maternal education and marital status, and children's nutrition status, noted the researchers.

Their results support much of the recent research into omega-3 fatty acids, which have been shown to improve the brain functioning of children.

In May two UK companies launched omega-3 enriched milks specifically targeted at families with young children.