

COMPLETE EFA (ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS)



'Fat free' or 'less than 5% fat' foods are becoming more and more popular because in addition to the current fashion to be slim there is an association between fat in the diet and heart and arterial disease. However, although it is true that our diets should not supply us with more than 30% of our calories as fat, there are certain fats that we do need for good health which the body cannot make. These are termed essential fatty acids (EFA's) and they function as components of nerves cells, cell membranes and prostaglandins (hormone like substances). Most people's diets are lacking in these. There are 2 types of EFA, omega-3 and omega-6, and because these both produce different types of prostaglandin they must be taken in the correct ratio to ensure that a favourable balance is achieved. Ideally we need four times as much omega-6 as omega-3 fatty acids, but because our diets already supply much omega-6 and little omega-3 EFA's, to redress the balance with a supplement, higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids are required. Fish Oil and Flaxseed Oil are rich in omega-3 fatty acids and Flaxseed Oil and Starflower Oil are rich in omega-6 fatty acids. All three oils provide a source of omega-9 fatty acids which are stable and resist oxidative damage. Because they are liquid at body temperature they help keep our arteries supple.



The Benefits of Essential Fatty Acids

Heart and circulation health - omega-3 lowers serum triglycerides (harmful blood fats) and reduces irregular heartbeats and the risk of blood clots. Omega-6 has been shown to reduce high serum cholesterol. Both may help lower high blood pressure by reducing blood 'stickiness' and hence the resistance to flow. EFA's have been shown to benefit in Raynaud's phenomenon (cold hands and feet due to poor circulation).



Brain development and health - EFA's are essential for brain development in the foetus, for efficient nervous system function throughout life. Success has been reported in treating depression, childhood hyperactivity and learning disorders such as attention deficit disorder (ADD), dyspraxia and dyslexia. Male and female moods improve with EFA supplementation.

Cell health - omega-3 and omega-6 EFA's stabilise and strengthen cell membranes. Unhealthy or leaky cells are the basis of many problems including allergies, psoriasis and other inflammatory diseases.

Joint health - trials show that EFA's help people with rheumatoid arthritis because of their anti-inflammatory and immune modulating effect.



Immune system - low levels of essential fatty acids may stop the action of interferon, the body's natural virus inhibitor.

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) - omega-6 EFA's have been shown to reduce swollen abdomen, breast discomfort, period pains and headaches as well as reducing irritability and depression.

Menopause - thought to regulate hormone levels and relieve some of the symptoms of the menopause such as hot flushes and yeast infections due to vaginal dryness.

Eczema and other skin disorders - widely used for eczema. Psoriasis sufferers may also benefit.



Properties

Prostaglandins - are very active biological substances involved in nearly every bodily function including the inflammatory process, healing and repair, the immune system, the neural circuits in the brain, the cardiovascular system, the digestive and reproductive systems and the body thermostats. There are 3 types of prostaglandins formed from EFA's, series 1 and 2 prostaglandins from omega-6 EFA's and series 3 prostaglandins from omega-3 EFA's. Good health requires the correct proportion of prostaglandins which in turn depends upon the relative amounts of EFA's in the diet.

Cell membranes - omega-3's and 6's stabilise and strengthen cell membranes making them more flexible and fluid. Healthy membranes improve cell function and help in the building of new tissue and the repair of old.



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