



Pearl City Medical Associates, Inc.

OMEGA 3 FATTY ACIDS

ALPHA-LINOLENIC ACID

Information provided by: *Natural Medicines Consumer Information and Education*

What Is Alpha-linolenic Acid?

Alpha-linolenic acid is an essential omega-3 fatty acid. It is called “essential” because it is needed for normal human growth and development. It can be found in nuts, vegetable oil, canola oil, soybean oil, red meat and dairy products.

How Does It Work?

Alpha-linolenic acid is popular for preventing and treating diseases of the heart and blood vessels (heart attacks, lower high blood pressure, lower cholesterol, and reverse “hardening of the blood vessels”). Alpha-linolenic acid is thought to decrease the risk of heart disease by helping to maintain normal heart rhythm and heart pumping. It might also reduce blood clots. Although alpha-linolenic acid seems to benefit the cardiovascular system and might reduce the risk of heart disease, research to date does not show it has a significant effect of cholesterol levels.

Any Interactions?

● Medications

It is not known if this product interacts with any medicines. Before taking this product, talk with your health professional if you take any medications.

● Food, herbs, and supplements

No known interactions.

Is It Effective?

According to *Natural Medicines*, the effectiveness ratings for alpha-linolenic acid are as follows:

● Reducing the risk of hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis)

High dietary intake of alpha-linolenic acid seems to reduce the “plaque” in arteries serving the heart. Plaque is the fatty build up that characterizes atherosclerosis.

● Reducing the risk of heart disease and heart attacks


High DIETARY intake of alpha-linolenic acid over a period of 6 years seems to reduce the risk of a first heart attack by as much as 59% in both men and women. Increasing DIETARY intake of alpha-linolenic acid by 1.0-1.2 grams per day appears to decrease the risk of death due to heart disease by 20% or more in people with or without existing heart disease. It is not known if alpha-linolenic acid supplements have these same benefits. Some research suggests alpha-linolenic acid has a greater effect on coronary heart disease when intake of fish oils is low.

● High blood pressure

Eating a diet high in alpha-linolenic acid seems to reduce risk of hypertension by about a third.

● Pneumonia

Eating a diet high in alpha linolenic acid seems to reduce the risk of getting pneumonia.





According to *Natural Medicines*, there is **INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE** to rate the effectiveness of alpha-linolenic acid for:

- **Prostate cancer**

There is contradictory evidence about the role of alpha-linolenic acid in prostate cancer. Some research suggests that high dietary intake of alpha-linolenic acid might increase the risk of getting prostate cancer.

- **Crohn's disease**
- **Depression**
- **Diabetes**
- **High cholesterol**

- **Kidney disease**
- **Migraines**
- **Multiple sclerosis**
- **Rheumatoid arthritis**

- **Skin diseases**
- **Systemic lupus erythematosus**
- **Other conditions**

What Dose Is Used?

- **By mouth for prevention of coronary heart disease**

Approximately 1.2-2 grams per day from dietary sources seems to be associated with the greatest benefit.

- **By mouth for prevention of a second heart attack or other second event in people with coronary heart disease**

Approximately 1.6 grams per day as part of a Mediterranean diet appears to be beneficial.

Any Safety Concerns?

Alpha-linolenic acid is **LIKELY SAFE** for most adults when used in amounts found in foods. There is not enough information to know if it is safe in higher amounts. Alpha-linolenic acid from food sources is very well tolerated. However, it is high in calories and may cause weight gain if consumed in excess.

Special Precautions and Warnings:

- **Pregnancy and breastfeeding**

Alpha-linolenic acid is **LIKELY SAFE** in amounts found in food. Stay on the safe side and avoid using alpha-linolenic acid supplements.

- **High levels of blood fats (triglycerides)**

Do not take alpha-linolenic acid supplements if you have high levels of triglycerides. Alpha-linolenic acid might make the condition worse.

- **Prostate cancer**

Do not take alpha-linolenic acid supplements if you have prostate cancer or are at high risk for getting prostate cancer (i.e. you have a father or brother with prostate cancer). There is some evidence that alpha-linolenic acid might increase the chance of getting prostate cancer.

See additional brochures for information about the other two omega 3 fatty acids:

- **Eicosapentaenoic Acid (EPA)**
- **Docosahexaenoic Acid (DHA)**

