OPTIONS CENTER
NUTRITION TOPIC

ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS (EFAs)

Taken from the Lectures of Dr. Janet Lang, B.A., DC

General Considerations

- EFA's are not made by the body and must be included in our daily diet.
- EFAs are of two kinds: Omega 6 (Linoleic Acid), and Omega 3 (alpha-Linoleic Acid).
- Food and oil processing destroys virtually all EFAs.
- EFA deficiency, especially Omega 3, is by far the most severe of the many nutritional deficiencies in the American diet.
- EFAs are the most biologically active nutrients in the body and are especially needed in the most biologically active areas such as the brain and all cell membranes.
- The health consequences of EFA deficiency are enormous, and are only just beginning to be documented. Deficiencies in other good fats and consumption of trans fats compound the problem.

Some Major Functions of EFAs

1) EFAs do not make you fat.
2) EFAs help boost your metabolism (which assists in normalizing weight).
3) EFAs make important body structures and participate in important functions, such as:
   a) Formation of all cell and organelle membranes
   b) Hormone precursors-necessary for the proper function of all endocrine glands
   c) Eicosanoid/Prostaglandin precursors (cellular hormones controlling most cell functions)
   d) Anti-mutagenic (protect DNA from mutation)
   e) Anti-bacterial, anti-viral and anti-fungal
   f) Protect the inner lining of blood vessels
   g) Keep blood fats dispersed
   h) Normalize cholesterol and triglyceride levels
   i) Crucial to normal nerve and brain structure and function
   j) Bring oxygen into cells
   k) Play a part in calcium and other mineral metabolism
   l) Skin and organ health
   m) Proper immune system function (and probably protection against autoimmune diseases)
   n) Enhance memory and learning
   o) Increase energy
   p) Normalize appetite (reestablish natural appetite control)

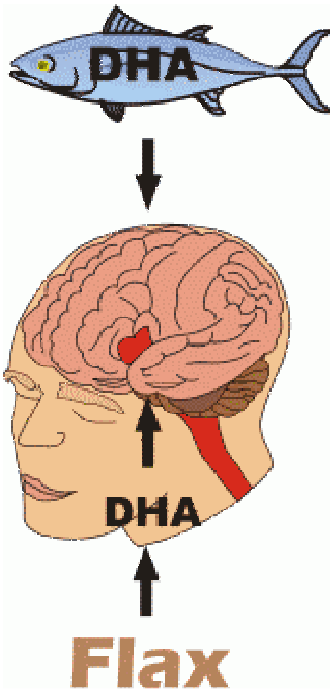
q) Stop sweet and food cravings
r) Decrease cellulite deposits
s) Natural and antidepressant and mood enhancement
t) Increase vitality and stamina
u) Prevent hyperactivity, anxiety
v) Increase ability to handle stress
w) And much more!!

Initial Considerations

- People who are EFA deficient are often deficient in the nutrients to make the enzymes that metabolize the parent EFAs into their important derivatives. These nutrients, or the foods containing them, must be added. These nutrients are B-complex vitamins, vitamin C, magnesium, zinc and probably other trace minerals.
- Increased EFA intake needs increased antioxidant intake to protect these highly active and volatile nutrients. Antioxidants are required such as vitamin E, vitamin C, zinc, selenium and more.
- Trans fats must be reduced/eliminated from the diet, as these interfere with the function of natural fats and EFAs.
- Saturated and monounsaturated fats are needed in appropriate amounts in the diet for the proper functioning of EFAs.
- When you begin EFA support, monitor for gall bladder stress and correct if needed.

Balance of EFAs and Natural Fats; Required for Optimal Health

- According to Mary Enig, Ph.D., one of the foremost authorities and researchers in Fats and Oils, the following describes an ideal balance of fats and EFAs:
  → Omega 3 EFAs should comprise 1 to 1.5% of calories consumed
  → Omega 6 EFAs should comprise 2 to 3% of calories consumed
  → Fats should provide 20-30% of the calories in our diet.
  → Sufficient intake of saturated and monounsaturated fats is necessary for EFAs to function properly
  →
- It is documented that the American diet has so few Omega 3s that the average American's Omega 6 to Omega 3 ratio is around 25 to 1. *It should be around 2 to 1.*



- It is also documented that the average American has a high intake of trans fats and a low intake of natural saturated and monounsaturated fats.
- Most people need to over-emphasize the Omega 3s, usually for at least 6 to 9 months, and possibly tone down the Omega 6 oils for that period of time.
- It takes time to replenish EFAs and natural fats into the body. The longer you have been eating a low fat diet, the longer it takes to re-balance your deficiencies. Consider 6 to 12 months.

Important Point: Highly unsaturated oils such as EFAs should comprise a very small portion of your fat intake (about 5% of overall fat ingestion). Saturated fat intake should make up the majority of fat intake (about 30% of your diet altogether). The media touts exactly the opposite.

Here Are the Reasons for this Important Point:

1) Most fat structures (for example – brain, nerve tissue, cell membranes and steroid hormones) are composed of saturated fats.
2) This is so because these fats are stable at room and body temperature.
3) Essential Fatty Acids are not stable at body temperature and must be protected with antioxidant nutrients. If you eat large amounts of unsaturated fatty acids (like EFAs), you will tax your antioxidant reserve beyond capacity, resulting in:
   a) The need to refrigerate yourself, or
   b) Your brain and blood will go rancid
4) The myth of saturated fats causing heart disease and other health problems is thoroughly ingrained, and totally wrong.

For further information see *Know Your Fats: The Complete Primer for Understanding the Nutrition of Fats, Oils and Cholesterol* by Mary G. Enig, Ph.D. Dr. Enig is a world-class lipid researcher, and she and her team are at the University of Maryland.

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