

Facing Fats - Why Fatty Acids are Essential

If it wasn't for the word 'essential' many of us would be put off taking Essential Fatty Acids. After all, 'fatty' has such negative connotations and fat is supposed to be the killer nutrient.

Nothing could be further from the truth – because polyunsaturated fats are life enhancing rather than the opposite. There are four basic types of fat the body takes from food: cholesterol, saturated fat, monounsaturated fat and polyunsaturated essential fatty acids. The polyunsaturated essential fatty acids are the 'good fats' and the one's the body uses to build itself. The other fats are to be avoided or only consumed in small quantities... but they are also the fats in many processed foods and typical junk food.

Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs) are just that, essential. Our bodies can neither manufacture them nor store them. So we need a regular supply in our food. These fats are converted by the body into chemicals that are constantly in demand for essential body processes. Many people are deficient in these valuable oils... in fact it is believed that 80% of the USA population are deficient in EFAs. The UK is probably not far behind.

EFAs are largely available as oils and there are both animal (mainly fish) and vegetable varieties. These oils contain the key EFAs Omega 3, Omega 6 and Omega 9. The goal is to have a healthy balance of all three. The problem arises when they are out of balance... in the western world we tend to consume too much Omega 6 when we need a larger proportion of Omega 3.

So why do we need them and what are they good for?

In addition to providing energy, Essential Fatty Acids are part of the structure of every cell in our bodies. Our bodies need them to maintain a healthy heart, a healthy brain, and healthy organs, eyes, skin, joints, hair and immune system. In fact, EFAs are essential for maintaining a wide range of our bodies' processes:

- Immune Response
- Blood Clotting
- Muscle maintenance
- Nerves
- Bodily Secretions
- Hormone system
- Cell Division
- Healthy Heart
- Oxygen Transport
- Healthy Brain
- Kidney Function
- Healthy Joints and Skin

PLUS, the good news for sun worshippers is that EFAs have been shown to provide a natural sunscreen from the inside out. They also help maintain good memory function and may combat symptoms of depression.

But deficiency is not good news – poor intake of EFAs can lead to a range of degenerative illnesses (as well as poor energy levels and feeling generally under par).

Which foods contain EFAs?

Essential Fatty Acids are available in fish oils, Flax oil, Hemp Seed oil, Borage oil and Starflower oil.

Omega 6 oils are found in grains, Hemp Seed oil and Flax seed oil, most plant-based oils, poultry, and eggs.

Omega 3 oils are found in Hemp Seed, Hemp Seed oil, Flaxseed, Flaxseed oil, Walnuts and in fatty, coldwater fish such as Salmon, Herring, Sardines, Halibut, Bluefish, Tuna, and Mackerel. Venison and Buffalo are also sources of Omega-3s.

Hemp Seed oil has the perfect balance of Omegas 3, 6 & 9.

Xynergy comment:

Spirulina also contains GLA (Gamma Linolenic Acid) – another essential fat which is also found in Evening Primrose Oil. Spirulina has three times the level of GLA compared with Evening Primrose Oil.

Comvita have just launched a range of EFA products made from ultra-purified fish oil sourced from the special oils found naturally in cold water deep-sea fish. The range includes a product specially for children. All are available as easy-to-take soft gels. Fish oil is a rich source of important fatty acids, in particular EPA and DHA which are constituent nutrients in Omega 3. These high quality Comvita products include high strength EPA and DPA. You can find them under the Essential Fatty Acids category on the Xynergy website.

Pukka Hemp Seed oil is also available on the Xynergy website. Look in the Ayurvedic category then click on Cold Pressed Oils.