

Essential Fatty Acids

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What Are Essential Fatty Acids?

Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs) are a group of polyunsaturated fatty acids which are essential for your overall health. These fatty acids are important in the normal functioning of all tissues of the body.

The two fatty acids that are essential for humans are **Omega-3 alpha-linolenic acid (ALA)** and **Omega-6 linoleic acid (LA)**.

- Omega-3: Derived from → Linolenic acid (ALA) → EPA & DHA
- Omega-6 : Derived from → Linoleic acid (LA) & Arachidonic Acid (AA) & Gamma Linolenic Acid (GLA)

Did You Know?

Omega 3 fatty acids are required in human health, but they cannot be made by the body so we must get them through the diet or supplementation. They are, therefore, called essential fatty acids.

Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty Acid Benefits

- Important structural components of cell membranes
- Serve as precursors to bioactive lipid mediators
- Provide a source of energy
- Support neurological and visual development
- Provide cognitive support (learning, memory, concentration, mood support)
- Support healthy blood sugar levels
- Supports cardiovascular health
- Supports immune system health
- Supports healthy joints

	OMEGA 3	OMEGA 6
Known As:	ALA, EPA, DHA	LA, AA, GLA
Found In: Plant Based	ALA: Flaxseed oil, canola oil, walnuts, soybean oil, wheat germ	LA & GLA: Corn oil, sunflower oil, soybean oil and canola oil, hemp oil, black currant, borage oil
Found In: Animal Based	EPA & DHA: Oily fish, shellfish, krill, cod, salmon, tuna, mackerel	AA: Liver, egg yolks, animal meats and seafood

What Else Should I Know?

- ALA is converted into EPA and DHA in your body, but at a very low ratio. Studies suggest less than one percent of ALA is converted
- The longer-chain forms of omega-3 are found mostly in animals and they are **eicosapentaenoic and docosahexaenoic acids (EPA and DHA)**
- DHA is the primary structural component of your brain and retina, and EPA is its precursor
- Ideally the ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids should be 1:1, instead most Americans consume these fatty acids at a ratio closer to 15:1 → the imbalance can be due to overconsumption of refined vegetable oils and processed foods which are consumed in the Western diet
- Omega 6 linoleic acid (LA) is the most prevalent PUFA in the Western diet, therefore it is important to get enough Omega 3s in your diet to balance this ratio out

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