

Lack Of Essential Fats In The Diet Can Kill

A lot of talk has been generated over the past several years about fats. Are they good? Bad? Should fats be eliminated from our diets altogether? While this was once a common notion, it is now widely understood that not all fats are created equal. There are ones to avoid (like trans-fats), and ones to embrace, like essential fatty acids.

Essential fatty acids, or EFA's for short, are exactly what their name implies: an essential part of every person's diet. Unfortunately, these so-called "good fats" are usually the ones most lacking in most people's diets. Part of the problem lies within the fact that EFA's cannot be constructed within the body from other components. Instead, they must be consumed directly from foods which contain them. Herein lies another problem: many foods which are commonly found in North American diets do not contain significant amounts of EFA's.

Essential fatty acids are critical to the healthy formation of cell membranes. In fetuses, they are necessary components of brain and nervous system development. In adults, they help to maintain heart health and control hormonal levels. Without adequate intake of essential fatty acids, humans are at risk for high blood pressure, poor blood circulation and consistency, and immune system disorders.

Essential fatty acids, which consist of Omega-3 and Omega-6, are found largely in fish. They are also found in plant-based sources such as flaxseed, soybeans, certain nuts, berries, and vegetables, and in leafy green vegetables like broccoli, kale and hemp. North Americans often do not take in enough of these types of foods to garner even the minimum daily requirement of EFA's. This should also be reconciled with the fact that much of the North American diet consists of processed foods. When foods are processed, it strips them of many of their natural nutrients. In other words, eating a fast-food fish sandwich is not the same as consuming a fresh trout steak.

Incorporating more essential fatty acids into your diet may not be as difficult as you think. You don't need to make any radical changes. By simply adding to, or being creative with, your current diet, you can probably get all the essential fatty acids that you need. Some easy ways to do this include (but are not limited to):

- * Staying away from processed foods. Stick to fresh or fresh-to-frozen foods for maximum benefits.
- * Adding walnuts, which are high in EFA's (especially Omega-6) to salads, baking, and breakfast cereals. Or, simply pop a handful of walnuts for a nutritious snack.
- * Cooking with ground flaxseed. It can be sprinkled on cereal or toast with ease. It can also be added to batter and dough of home-baking. It can even be dashed into soups and sauces. Because it is so finely ground, it's texture will be barely noticeable. It will also add a slightly nutty flavor to your food. A little flaxseed goes a long way!
- * Trying to incorporate fresh fish into your diet. Strive for at least once per week, though health professionals and nutritionists recommend two times weekly. If your family turns its nose up at fish, experiment with different recipes. Tuna fish sandwiches are also a good source of EFA's.
- * Eating more berries. Instead of an apple, try a handful of fresh blueberries for a snack once or twice a week.
- * Serving salad with every dinner. Try to look for dark salad greens (like kale and spinach). Iceberg lettuce does not contain significant amounts of EFA's.
- * Getting creative with tofu. Even if you don't like to eat it straight up, you can mix it into other dishes. In its soft form, it can be used to form the base for salad dressings and even desserts like cheesecake.
- * When cooking with oil, opt for canola, walnut, flaxseed, or soy oils, which are a good source of EFA's.

These are not radical changes, but are uncomplicated ways to increase your intake of those important fats. Changes in lifestyle can be difficult for some so there are omega-3 and omega-6 supplements available as well. With time, you'll probably notice an increase in your energy level and better immunity against illness. EFA's are fats that you can feel good about eating and the benefits will last a lifetime.

About the Author

More information on [essential fatty acids](http://vitanetonline.com/) is available at VitaNet ®, LLC Health Food Store. <http://vitanetonline.com/>