

## ***Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs): Your Brain and Body***

Fatty acids are the basic building blocks of which fats and oils are composed. Contrary to popular myth, the body does need fat. It must be the right kind, however.

The fatty acids that are necessary for health and that cannot be made by the body are called *essential fatty acids* (EFAs). They are occasionally also referred to as *vitamin F* or *polyunsaturates*. EFAs must be supplied through the diet.

**Essential fatty acids have desirable effects on many disorders. They improve the skin and hair, reduce blood pressure, aid in the prevention of arthritis, lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels, and reduce the risk of blood clot formation. They are beneficial for candidiasis, cardiovascular disease, eczema, and psoriasis. Found in high concentrations in the brain, EFAs aid in the transmission of nerve impulses and are needed for the normal development and functioning of the brain. A deficiency of essential fatty acids can lead to an impaired ability to learn and recall information.**

Every living cell in the body needs essential fatty acids. They are essential for rebuilding and producing new cells. Essential fatty acids are also used by the body for the production of prostaglandins, hormone like substances that act as chemical messengers and regulators of various body processes.

There are two basic categories of essential fatty acids, designated omega-3 and omega-6, based on their chemical structures. Omega-3 EFAs, including alpha-linolenic and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), are found in fresh deepwater fish, fish oil, and certain vegetable oils, and walnut oil. Omega-6 EFAs, which include linolenic and gamma-linolenic acids, are found primarily in raw nuts, seeds, and legumes, and in unsaturated vegetable oils, such as borage seed oil, grape seed oil, primrose oil, sesame oil, and soy bean oil. In order to supply essential fatty acids, these oils must be consumed in pure liquid or supplement form and must not be subjected to heat, either in processing or cooking. Heat destroys essential fatty acids. Worse, it results in the creation of dangerous free radicals. If oils are hydrogenated (processed to make the oil more solid, as is commonly done in the production of margarine), the linoleic acid is converted into trans-fatty acids, which are not beneficial to the body.

The daily requirement for essential fatty acids is satisfied by an amount of one tablespoon or four to six 1000 mg. soft gels taken on a daily basis. The most essential of the essential fatty acids is linoleic acid.

A number of sources of essential fatty acids are recommended, among them fish oils, flaxseed oil and flaxseeds, grape seed oil, primrose oil and borage seed oil.