Omega-6 Fatty Acids

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Omega-6 Fatty Acids  
What is it?  
Omega-6 fatty acids, such as gamma linolenic acid, are a family of fats found in some plant oils and seeds. They are different from omega-3 fatty acids.   
  
Omega-6 fatty acids are found everywhere in the body. They help with the function of all cells. But too much omega-6 fatty acids can change the way cells react and have harmful effects on cells in the heart and blood vessels.  
  
People use omega-6 fatty acids for heart disease, child development, high cholesterol, cancer, diabetes, and many other conditions, but there is no good scientific evidence to support these uses.  
  
There are different types of omega-6 fatty acids, such as gamma linolenic acid (GLA). Also, some supplements are used as sources of omega-6 fatty acids, such as evening primrose, borage, and black currant. See separate listings for these topics.  
  
  
  
  
How effective is it?  
Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database rates effectiveness based on scientific evidence according to the following scale: Effective, Likely Effective, Possibly Effective, Possibly Ineffective, Likely Ineffective, Ineffective, and Insufficient Evidence to Rate.The effectiveness ratings for OMEGA-6 FATTY ACIDS are as follows:Possibly ineffective for...  
Heart disease. Higher intake of omega-6 fatty acids in the diet doesn't reduce the risk of heart disease.  
Infant development. Adding the omega-6 fatty acid called arachidonic acid to infant formula, along with an omega-3 fatty acid called docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), doesn't seem to improve brain development, vision, or growth in infants.   
High levels of cholesterol or other fats (lipids) in the blood (hyperlipidemia). Higher intake of omega-6 fatty acids in the diet doesn't seem to lower cholesterol or triglyceride levels.   
Multiple sclerosis (MS). Taking omega-6 fatty acids does not seem to prevent the progression of MS.  
  
  
There is interest in using omega-6 fatty acids for a number of other purposes, but there isn't enough reliable information to say whether it might be helpful.  
  
  
Is it safe?  
When taken by mouth: Omega-6 fatty acids are commonly consumed as part of the diet in amounts between 5% and 10% of daily calories. But there isn't enough reliable information to know if omega-6 fatty acids are safe to use in larger amounts.   
Special precautions & warnings:  
Pregnancy and breast-feeding: Omega-6 fatty acids are commonly consumed as part of the diet in amounts between 5% and 10% of daily calories. But consuming higher amounts is possibly unsafe and might increase the risk of having a very small infant or for the child to develop eczema. There isn't enough reliable information to know if omega-6 fatty acid supplements are safe to use when pregnant or breast-feeding. Stay on the safe side and avoid use.  
Children: Omega-6 fatty acids are commonly consumed as part of the diet in amounts between 5% and 10% of daily calories in children over 1 year old. But there isn't enough reliable information to know if omega-6 fatty acids are safe to use as medicine.  
A lung disease that makes it harder to breathe (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD): Omega-6 fatty acids can make breathing more difficult in people with COPD. Do not use omega-6 fatty acid supplements if you have COPD.  
Diabetes: High intake of omega-6 fatty acids in the diet can increase the risk of developing high blood pressure in people with diabetes. Until more is known, do not use omega-6 fatty acid supplements if you have diabetes.  
High triglycerides (a type of fat): Omega-6 fatty acids can raise triglyceride levels. Do not use omega-6 fatty acid supplements if you have high triglyceride levels.  
  
  
Are there interactions with medications?  
It is not known if this product interacts with any medicines. Before taking this product, talk with your health professional if you take any medications.  
  
  
Are there interactions with herbs and supplements?  
There are no known interactions with herbs and supplements.  
  
  
Are there interactions with foods?  
There are no known interactions with foods.  
  
  
How is it typically used?  
There isn't enough reliable information to know what an appropriate dose of omega-6 fatty acids might be. Keep in mind that natural products are not always necessarily safe and dosages can be important. Be sure to follow relevant directions on product labels and consult a healthcare professional before using.   
  
  
Other names  
Acides Gras Essentiels N-6, Acides Gras Om ga-6, Acides Gras Om gas 6, Acides Gras Polyinsatur s, Acidos Grasos Omega 6, AGE, AGPI, Huiles d'Om ga 6, N-6, N-6 EFAs, N-6 Essential Fatty Acids, Omega 6, Omega-6 Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids, Omega 6 Oils.  
  
  
Methodology  
  
 To learn more about how this article was written, please see the Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database methodology.   
   
  
  
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