



Ask Leyla: What's a good source of omega-6 fatty acids?



Q: Which is better, borage oil or evening primrose oil as an anti-inflammatory in addition to omega-3 fatty acids?

A: Borage oil is derived from the seed of the plant *Borago officinalis* also known as starflower. Evening primrose oil (EPO) is derived from the yellow wildflower, *Oenothera biennis*. Both of these oils, along with black currant seed oil, are rich sources of gamma-linolenic acid (GLA).

Not all omega-6 fatty acids are the same. Most omega-6 fatty acids in our Western diet come from processed vegetable oils—promoters of inflammation.

GLA on the other hand, is an essential omega-6 fatty acid which helps reduce inflammation. There is some evidence to suggest it may even protect DNA.

GLA supports cellular health and immune health. It confers its anti-inflammatory benefits via conversion to dihomo-gamma-linolenic acid (DGLA) which is the precursor to anti-inflammatory prostaglandins and anti-thrombotic leukotrienes. For this conversion to take place however, you must have sufficient levels of magnesium, zinc, vitamin C and B vitamins.

These beneficial omega-6 fatty acids have been shown to help reduce symptoms of conditions such as diabetic neuropathy, eczema and acne, PMS and mastalgia (breast pain). Some studies have shown mild benefit with rheumatoid arthritis, hypertension (although not as much as omega-3 fatty acids like fish oil) and other inflammatory conditions such as asthma.

Borage oil contains much more GLA than EPO and the GLA from borage seeds contains only *tiny* amounts of pyrrolizidine alkaloids which are mainly concentrated in the leaves and flowers of the plant. The pyrrolizidine alkaloids, most notably amabiline, are known to be toxic to the liver. So it is imperative that you source your borage oil supplement wisely.

To your health!

Leyla Muedin, MS, RD, CDN

Email your questions to RadioProgram@aol.com.