

Lecithin Benefits

In this day of nutritional supplements and health awareness, people know relatively little about the countless lecithin benefits. Read on to learn more about this amazing element:

Lecithin is essential to your good health for many reasons. It acts as an emulsifier, breaking up fats and cholesterol. It helps to maintain a healthy heart. It is a source rich in gamma linoleic acid (GLA) and has the highest (98% or more) concentration of phosphatide available. Lecithin helps the body to utilize vitamins A, D, E, and K and is excellent for maintaining strong concentration and memory. Lecithin benefits include a cleansing of the liver and kidneys, and help the body to absorb nutrients. To top it all off, lecithin can be easily combined into your favorite drinks, salads, nut butters, spreads and sauces.

For all of the wonderful benefits of lecithin, it can be hard to believe that it is actually nothing more than a byproduct of the humble soybean. A byproduct, after all, is little more than waste. So, why does this "waste" product contain so many health benefits? The answers lie in the theory behind lecithin.

History and Origin

The word lecithin is derived from the word lekithos, which is Greek for "egg yolk." It was given that name because lecithin was first discovered in 1850 when French scientist Maurice Gobley isolated the compound from an egg yolk. For years after its discovery, people got their source of lecithin from egg yolk. Then in the mid 1930s it was discovered that lecithin could be found in the waste products of soybean processing. This discovery changed the entire face of commercial lecithin.

Today, most of the commercial lecithin we find on the market comes from soybeans. Lecithin is a powerful emulsifier. Since its initial discovery, lecithin has been widely marketed in the commercial sector as an emulsifier, used mainly in the food industry but also as an ingredient in products such as paints and pharmaceuticals.

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In the scientific community, lecithin is used as a synonym for phosphatidyl choline (PC). This compound is believed to be responsible for all of the lecithin benefits, specifically its medicinal effects.

When we consume phosphatidyl choline, the compound is broken down into a nutrient simply known as "choline", considered to be an essential nutrient. The nutrient is considered to be "essential" because our bodies cannot manufacture their own supply of choline. Instead, we must depend upon the foods we eat to maintain appropriate levels.

Lecithin is an essential component of cell membranes. In fact, it defines the very structure of cells. One of the main lecithin benefits is to maintain the integrity of cell membranes, helping to facilitate the movement of fluids inside and outside the cell.

As a component of bile, lecithin emulsifies fats. If you've spent any time at all in the kitchen, you'll already know how fats react to certain conditions. When exposed to low temperatures, fats tend to turn white and go into a semi-solid state. When exposed to high temperatures, however, they turn completely liquid. Imagine what would happen to our bodies if our fats, or lipids, were to undergo these same changes at the slightest change of temperature. Perhaps the most important of the lecithin benefits is its emulsifying action, keeping fats properly balanced and maintained.

Lecithin is also a component of the myelin sheath, which is the thin covering that creates a protective layer for our brain cells and spinal chord. In addition, some studies have shown that one of the lecithin benefits is to facilitate cell signaling, that is the process by which cells communicate with each other to maintain and improve bodily functions.

There is no question that lecithin benefits our health in many ways. From the way we digest our foods to the longevity of our hearts, lecithin benefits are some of the most important to keeping us healthy.