holistic healing

Evening primrose oil

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Your body needs essential fatty acids (EFAs), just as it needs other essential vitamins and minerals, for the proper structure and function of every cell in the body for optimal health. Essential fats must be obtained through diet or supplementation because the body cannot make them.

Deficiencies of EFAs are common today for three reasons: modern dietary and lifestyle choices; the effects of environmental pollution; and the trouble some people have in converting linoleic acid (LA) and alpha linolenic acid (ALA) to their metabolites, GLA, EPA, and DHA respectively. These metabolites are responsible for the production of a powerful family of hormones called eicosanoids.

Prostaglandins, a type of eicosanoid, control the balance of virtually every system in the body including the mechanisms of inflammation, blood clotting, and blood vessel dilation. The production of sufficient levels of these hormones is critical for many women's health conditions including eczema, arthritis, breast pain, breast cancer prevention, and premenstrual syndrome (PMS).

Healthy fats, healthy hormones

A deficiency of GLA is one major cause of the hormone fluctuations that occur during PMS and menstruation. Many of us are deficient in this important fatty acid, and instead, we have an overabundance of the proinflammatory fat, known as arachidonic acid, which is found in meat and dairy products.

Before menstruation, arachidonic acid is released and a cascade of prostaglandins is initiated in the uterus. The inflammatory response initiated by these prostaglandins result in the vasoconstriction and contractions causing the pain, cramps, nausea,
Supplementing with evening primrose oil

- For general health maintenance take 0.25 to 0.5 grams of evening primrose oil per day.
- Minor side effects that may occur with evening primrose oil supplementation include nausea, upset stomach, and loose bowel movements.
- These side effects may be minimized by taking supplements with food or milk, taking the daily dose in divided portions, and increasing the dose slowly.
- Avoid supplementing with EPO during pregnancy and lactation.

Supplementing with evening primrose oil may help increase healthy fats in tissues such as the breast.

Researchers with the breast clinic at the University of Hong Kong evaluated EPO for the treatment of cyclical breast pain and concluded that EPO may be recommended as a first-line treatment for women experiencing such pain.

Breast health
Both the deficiency of anti-inflammatory prostaglandins and an imbalance of healthy fats may result in increased sensitivity to hormones. Women with breast cysts and pain often have abnormal fatty acid profiles, with increased proportions of saturated fatty acids and reduced proportions of EFAs. Supplementing with a good source of GLA, such as EPO, may help increase healthy fats in tissues such as the breast.

Skin health
As a contributor to the healthy function of cellular membranes, the GLA found in EPO helps to maintain the stability and fluidity of the natural water-loss barrier of the skin. When the barrier function of the skin is defective, skin disorders and damage can result. Common skin disorders include dry skin, eczema, sunburn, acne, and psoriasis.

In a 2002 study published in Skin Pharmacology and Applied Skin Physiology, the researchers determined the effectiveness of EPO in selected eczema patients with dry and itchy skin lesions. The researchers concluded their data provides strong evidence that EPO could be highly effective in the treatment of eczema characterized by dry scaly skin.

It is not necessary to live with the effects of GLA deficiency. Supplementing with evening primrose oil, available at your local health food store, is an excellent way to move toward optimal health.
