

Is Alpha Lipoic Acid the Emerging Premier Anti-Aging Antioxidant?

Normally, there is little free Alpha Lipoic Acid (ALA) circulating in your body, unless you consume supplements or take it by injection. Foods contain only tiny amounts of ALA. Your body manufactures enough ALA for the basic metabolic functions of energy production and dissolving some liver by-products. At the levels produced by your body ALA acts as an essential coenzyme for carbohydrate metabolism for energy. It also has been shown, at normal body production levels to increase production of glutathione, which helps dissolve substances in the liver. Additional supplementation with alpha lipoic acid may provide benefits beyond its involvement in carbohydrate metabolism. At supplemented levels, alpha lipoic acid acts as a powerful and versatile antioxidant. However, for this action to occur, there must be an excess amount available. ALA must be available in the "free" state within the cells. Only then will it perform its antioxidant and rejuvenating actions. An antioxidant helps neutralize free radicals in our bodies and protects our cells from damage. A free radical is an unstable molecule that tries to steal electrons from other molecules thus causing damage. Smoking, pollution, car exhaust, stress, and fried foods are common sources of free radicals. Cells are continuously under oxidative stress, and when the antioxidant defenses are not fully efficient, there is an accumulation of oxidative damage over time. Alpha lipoic acid may provide three advantages when used as a supplement: 1) it is easily absorbed into the blood stream 2) it can also cross the blood brain barrier to perform as an effective brain antioxidant, clearing blood vessels and enhancing brain cell activity 3) it deactivates both fat and water soluble free radicals, protecting both lipoproteins and cellular membranes. These advantages and its usefulness as a broad-spectrum cellular protector cause many health experts to believe alpha lipoic acid is emerging as the premier anti-aging antioxidant. The widely accepted theory today asserts that accumulated cellular damage, caused by free radicals generated by on-going normal metabolism and environmental sources, is the basis of aging. As we age, mitochondria function is impaired, and this impairment is theorized to cause the adverse effects of aging. Alpha lipoic acid is by its self a powerful antioxidant, but it works synergistically with vitamin C, E and other antioxidants, "recycling" them and making them much more available. It also helps protect the mitochondria and the DNA genetic material. Recent research studies on alpha lipoic acid demonstrate 4 activities: 1) Functions as an antioxidant and assists the B-vitamins in producing energy from proteins, carbohydrates, and fats consumed from foods. 2) Supports brain function in aging adults by improving memory. 3) Helps increase blood flow to the nerves. 4) Assists the liver in flushing by-products from the body.

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