

Alpha Lipoic Acid Fact Sheet

What is alpha lipoic acid?

Alpha lipoic acid is derived from dietary sources (spinach, liver, red meat, brewer's yeast), although the body does manufacture a small supply of its own. Alpha lipoic acid is found in all cells, especially those that require a great deal of energy to work, such as the heart cells.

How will it help me?

Some people with mitochondrial disorders really respond to extra alpha lipoic acid in their bodies. In order to get the concentrated doses needed to treat mitochondrial disorders, it is often helpful to take additional alpha lipoic acid as a supplement in pill form. You may experience fewer symptoms of the disorder as a result of taking this supplement.

Alpha lipoic acid helps to make energy in the mitochondria of the body. It also acts as an "antioxidant". Oxygen free radicals are charged oxygen molecules that can destroy the walls of cells. Alpha lipoic acid acts as a "buffer" to protect the cell walls from these free radicals.

How do I know if I'm responding to alpha lipoic acid?

It may take up to 3 months to see any improvement in symptoms. **It is very important that you keep track of your symptoms on the symptom diary sheet given to you at the clinic.** This will help both you and your doctor to see if alpha lipoic acid is helping you. If you did not receive a symptom diary sheet, please call the clinic at 604-875-5965 and we will send one to you.

When should I take it?

Alpha lipoic acid can be taken anytime during the day, with or without food.

How much should I take?

A dose of 600 mg of alpha lipoic acid a day is generally recommended for mitochondrial disorders, although other dosing regimes are also reported. You should take this in divided doses of 200 mg, three times a day.

Are there any side effects?

Alpha lipoic acid is very safe at this dosage, although occasionally it causes mild stomach upset and in rare cases, it can trigger an allergic skin rash. If you experience any of these reactions, reduce the dose or stop taking the supplement.

Where do I get alpha lipoic acid?

Alpha lipoic acid is not available at all health food and drug stores. It is best to call those in your area first to see if they carry it. The Vitamin House has a few locations around the Lower Mainland and they carry the supplement.

Will my health plan cover it?

No. Unfortunately, health plans do not currently recognize alpha lipoic acid as a prescription medication.

Please note: If a **muscle biopsy** has been scheduled for you, please do not take this supplement for a month prior to the biopsy. Once you have the biopsy, you may resume taking it.