



SUPPLEMENT SPOTLIGHT:

Alpha-Lipoic Acid for Hepatitis C, Cancer, Diabetes, Stroke and more...

by Kathleen Pratt, ND

Alpha-lipoic acid is essential for overall health, and research shows promising results especially for fighting hepatitis C, cancer, diabetes, stroke and more. But first some definitions...

Alpha-lipoic acid is an antioxidant made by the body and found in every cell, where it helps turn glucose into energy.

Antioxidants attack free radicals, which are the waste products created when the body turns food into energy.

Free radicals cause harmful chemical reactions that can damage cells in the body, which in turn damage organs and tissues, making it harder for the body to fight infections.

Some antioxidants work only in water (such as vitamin C) or fatty tissues (such as vitamin E), but alpha-lipoic acid is both fat- and water-soluble, which means it can work throughout the body. As antioxidants attack free radicals they get “used up,” but evidence suggests alpha-lipoic acid may help regenerate these other antioxidants and make them active again.

Therapies including alpha lipoic acid are not FDA approved for effectiveness, but are generally considered safe when administered properly.

USES

Hepatitis: Intravenous (IV) alpha-lipoic acid has been reported to improve liver function and decrease viral load in people with Hepatitis C. A number of combination therapies have been used with IV alpha lipoic-acid, including with selenium and milk thistle.

Patients generally start with intravenous alpha-lipoic acid treatments twice daily for 1-2 weeks, then use oral supplements thereafter. Northwest Natural Health is pleased to offer these therapies, including our special protocols for using them safely even if you're receiving other treatments.

Pancreatic Cancer: There are now three confirmed case reports of patients with pancreatic cancer who used IV alpha-lipoic acid and low dose naltrexone to slow the progression of their disease. Northwest Natural Health is providing these treatments for cancer patients. This therapy can be used safely with our protocols, including when the

patient is receiving other treatments.

For more information, see these case reports: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20042414>

Diabetes: In several studies, alpha-lipoic acid appears to help lower blood sugar levels. Its ability to kill free radicals may also help people with diabetic peripheral neuropathy, who have pain, burning, itching, tingling and numbness in arms and legs from nerve damage.

Alpha-lipoic acid has been used for years to treat peripheral neuropathy in Germany. However, most of the studies that found it helpful used IV alpha-lipoic acid and it's not clear whether taking it by mouth will help. Although one 2006 study did find that taking oral alpha-lipoic acid for diabetic neuropathy reduced symptoms compared to a placebo.

Taking alpha-lipoic acid may help another diabetes-related condition as well, called autonomic neuropathy. This affects the nerves to internal organs. One study found that 73 people with cardiac autonomic neuropathy showed fewer signs of the condition when taking 800 mg of alpha-lipoic acid orally compared to a placebo.

Brain Function and Stroke: Because alpha-lipoic acid can pass easily into the brain, it may help protect the brain and nerve tissue. Researchers are currently investigating it as a potential treatment for stroke and other brain problems involving free radical damage, such as dementia. So far, there's no evidence to say whether it works or not.

Other: Some preliminary studies suggest alpha-lipoic acid may help treat glaucoma, but there is not enough evidence yet to substantiate the claim. In another study on aging skin, a cream with 5% alpha-lipoic acid helped reduce fine lines from sun damage.

SOURCES

If you're healthy, your body will make all the alpha-lipoic acid you need. It is also found in red meat, organ meats (such as liver) and yeast, particularly brewer's yeast.

Therapeutic alpha-lipoic acid is administered in a short, less than one hour, intravenous drip. Oral supplements are available as capsules.

DOSES

Adults should ask the advice of their healthcare provider, as the FDA has not established a required dosage. At this time, it is not recommended for children, or women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, because it has not been studied for these groups.

PRECAUTIONS

Side effects are generally rare and may include skin rash, but because of the potential for more serious side effects and interactions with medications, you should take alpha-lipoic acid only under the supervision of a licensed healthcare provider. If you are currently being treated with any of the following medications or have the conditions described, this is especially important.

Rest assured if you are a patient of ours, our protocols will not cause unwanted interactions.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS/POSSIBLE INTERACTIONS

B1 Deficiency: Animal studies suggest that people who don't get enough thiamine (vitamin B1), should not take alpha-lipoic acid. B1 deficiency is associated with long-term alcohol abuse.

Diabetes and Low Blood Sugar: Alpha-lipoic acid can lower blood sugar levels, alone or in combination with diabetes medications, raising the risk of hypoglycemia or low blood sugar. If you are not a patient of ours, talk with your healthcare provider before taking alpha-lipoic acid, and watch your blood sugar levels closely. Your healthcare provider may need to adjust your medication doses.

Chemotherapy: Alpha-lipoic acid can interfere with some chemotherapy medications. Always ask your oncologist before taking any herb or supplement, including alpha-lipoic acid.

Thyroid Medications (forms of Levothyroxin): Alpha-lipoic acid may lower levels of thyroid hormone. Your healthcare provider should monitor blood hormone levels and thyroid function tests closely. ❖

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