

Great Sources of Lecithin

Lecithin has become a buzzword in modern health reports and journals. But how do you know if lecithin is right for you?

There are actually many components found in lecithin that are essential for your good health. Just one tablespoon (approximately 7.5 grams) of lecithin granules contains about 1700 mg of phosphatidylcholine, 2,200 mg of essential fatty acids including linoleic acid and 1000 mg of phosphatidylinositol. All of these important elements contribute to the overall value of lecithin.

Even though lecithin has so many health benefits, many people do not consume adequate amounts of the compound. While a lecithin deficiency does not appear to have any adverse effects on people, a deficiency in choline, a component of lecithin, can lead to serious illnesses such as liver cancer and cirrhosis.

The reason for the overall reduced consumption of lecithin may be attributed to the lecithin sources themselves. Before World War II, people tended to eat larger amounts of red meats, whole eggs, organ meats, whole milk with cream and dairy cream, which are all excellent sources of lecithin. But the very components that make these foods so rich in lecithin are the very reasons that people turn away from them. Modern research has shown that these foods are also rich in fat and calories, which we know can pose negative health risks.

While these natural sources of lecithin can be a concern, there are other options available, such as lecithin supplements. According to the USDA's Economic Research Service, the average American consumed 12 fewer pounds of red meat in 1996 than 20 years ago. In addition, it was shown that the average American consumed only about 3 grams per day of lecithin, even with all of sources available. It's important that we take advantage of other sources of lecithin to contribute this valuable element to our everyday diets.

Soy Foods

Many people choose soy as a natural source of lecithin. In fact, most commercially sold sources of lecithin are derived from soybean oil. Soy consumption is increasing annually in the United States, which may help to increase the overall level of lecithin intake as well. Due to its versatility, soy contributes to a number of lecithin sources. Soybeans can be boiled or roasted and eaten whole. They can be processed and used as a base for a variety of foods, including popular choices like soy milk, tofu, soy sauce, meat alternatives, soybean oil and soy flour.

Supplements

To boost their intake of lecithin, many people choose to take dietary supplements. This is an easy and excellent way to increase lecithin to a healthy level. One tablespoon of lecithin granules can contain as many as 1,725 mg per serving. However, lecithin supplements taken in soft gel capsule form may contain as little as 180 mg per serving. It's important, then, to check the concentration of lecithin before choosing a supplement. Many sources will advise that lecithin granules are the best choice, as the body will readily synthesize the high percentage of phosphatidylcholine into the essential nutrient choline.

If you're like most people, you're not getting enough of this important compound in your daily diet. Ask your dietician or health care advisor about the many benefits of lecithin, and which sources of lecithin are best for you.