

The Major “Clinically Relevant” Fatty Acids: Characteristics, Differences, and Selection

<i>Fatty acid</i>	<i>Major physiologic functions</i>	<i>Patient groups and research applications</i>	<i>Common daily doses</i>	<i>Adverse effects¹</i>
ALA (omega-3 from flaxseed oil)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-inflammatory benefits^{1,2} 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cardioprotective³ may reduce the frequency and severity of migraine headaches⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3000-7000 mg per day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NONE
EPA (omega-3 from fish oil)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-inflammatory • Anti-thrombotic • Normalizes neurologic function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lupus⁵ • cancer⁶ • borderline personality disorder⁷ • mental depression^{8,9,10} • schizophrenia¹¹, • osteoporosis (when used with GLA).¹² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500-5,000 mg per day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • should be discontinued before surgery to reduce the risk of bleeding complications
DHA (omega-3 from fish oil)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-inflammatory • Cardio-protective • Normalizes neurologic function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bipolar disorder¹³ • Crohn's disease¹⁴ • rheumatoid arthritis^{15,16,17} • lupus¹⁸ • cardiovascular disease¹⁹ • psoriasis²⁰ • cancer²¹ • “anti-stress” benefits^{22,23} • reduces all-cause mortality in cardiac patients²⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500-5,000 mg per day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may make antidepressant medications unnecessary
GLA (omega-6 from evening primrose oil, borage seed oil, black currant seed oil)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anti-inflammatory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eczema²⁵ • breast cancer (when used with tamoxifen²⁶) • premenstrual syndrome²⁷ • rheumatoid arthritis^{28,29} • diabetic neuropathy³⁰, • migraine headaches (when used with ALA³¹) • respiratory distress syndrome (when used with EPA).³² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 300-3,000 mg 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may exacerbate temporal lobe epilepsy (one case report)