



## Alpha-Lipoic Acid For Diabetes

People with advanced Diabetes who are fighting nerve damage may find some support from the nutritional supplement Alpha Lipoic Acid. The powerful antioxidant may help prevent or slow nerve damage experienced by up to 70 percent of diabetics, according to Lester Packer, professor of molecular and cell biology at the University of California at Berkeley. Packer, speaking at the annual conference of the American Diabetes Association (ADA), added that alpha-lipoic acid "can't do any damage and there is even evidence that it can slow down the aging process."

Alpha-lipoic acid is unique because it is both fat and water soluble, which enhances its ability to scavenge and neutralize free radicals -- renegade oxygen molecules that cause damage and disease in the body. Further, unlike other antioxidants that cancel free radicals but then turn into free radicals themselves, alpha-lipoic acid is capable of regenerating itself back to its antioxidant form<sup>1,2</sup>.

In a study presented at the ADA conference, it was found that animals given the highest doses of alpha-lipoic acid had the highest amounts of the antioxidant in their nerve cells. It is felt that protection from free radicals is one of the best lines of defense for people with diabetes. In addition to proper diet, regular exercise and doctor-prescribed medication, diabetes can be successfully managed through routine supplementation, and I feel that alpha-lipoic acid should be offered to everyone with diabetes.

Research in Germany, where alpha-lipoic acid has been used to treat diabetic nerve damage for more than 25 years, indicates even more promising results. A 1997 report in the journal *Diabetes*, found that diabetics taking 600 mg. of alpha-lipoic acid daily experienced a reduction in nerve-damage related pain and numbness<sup>3</sup>. Other work by German researchers has shown that alpha-lipoic acid enhances the action of insulin and anti-diabetic drugs in lowering blood-glucose levels.<sup>4</sup>

Nerve damage is a serious complication of diabetes implicated in many of the 200,000 annual fatalities associated with the disease. It is believed to be the consequence of elevated blood-glucose levels. Nerve damage can affect the heart, eyes, kidneys, sexual organs, legs and feet. ADA statistics show that nerve damage is responsible for increasing diabetics' risk of leg amputations by up to 40 times greater than the general population. It is also the leading cause of new blindness among adults, and is associated with kidney disease, experienced by 10 percent to 21 percent of diabetics.

Alpha Lipoic Acid is found in minute quantities in foods like potatoes, spinach and red meat. However, to get the benefit of just 30 mg. of alpha-lipoic acid something like 10 tons of beef liver would have to be consumed. Using a supplement is much easier - healthy people at risk of diabetes should consider taking a daily dose of 60 mg. The recommended daily dose in Germany for diabetics suffering from nerve damage is 600 mg.

**References:**

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