

## Lecithin Facts

If you've ever tried making homemade chocolate fudge, you've probably wondered why the butter and cocoa just can't seem to stay mixed. The answer is in the emulsifying.

Commercial products, like chocolate bars, require an emulsifier to help bond certain ingredients, such as cocoa and butter. The emulsifier disperses the fat throughout the other ingredients to keep the mixture from separating. Lecithin can also act as an emulsifier within the human body. Lecithin is common ingredient used in many commercial products, from pharmaceuticals to protective coverings, and is often added to vitamin supplements.

What exactly is lecithin?

The human body produces lecithin in the liver, and transports it throughout the nervous and circulatory systems. This phospholipid is also known as phosphatidylcholine, or PC. Lecithin is composed mainly of B vitamins, choline, phosphoric acid, linoleic acid, and inositol.

As a phospholipid (fat-based element), lecithin plays a key role as a building block for cell membranes. Without lecithin, the cell membranes would harden and no longer stay semi-permeable. Lecithin protects cells from the destructive effects of oxidation, which is a naturally occurring process in the body caused by the presence of oxygen.

In the food industry, lecithin is regarded as one of the few emulsifiers that are commonly regarded as safe, and was approved for human consumption by the United States Food and Drug Administration. Since the substance is already an integral part of biological membranes it is completely biodegradable and easily metabolized. Unlike its synthetic alternatives, lecithin is virtually non-toxic.

The lecithin used in the commercial food industry is commonly extracted from egg yolk and soy. Other foods containing lecithin are commonly found in many animal and plant based foods including liver, peanuts, cauliflower, wheat germ, grape juice, and cabbage. Various studies have shown that lecithin from soy may have some positive effects on people with high cholesterol and triglyceride levels in the blood.

Benefits of lecithin

The benefits of lecithin seem to be attributed to the presence of choline. As a lipotropic substance, choline functions as an agent in the body's metabolism that aids in the digestion of fats. Simply put, choline helps to burn the fat that is stored within human tissues, and can act as an agent to support weight loss.

The more choline you have in your body, the faster your body will metabolize fat, and the lower your blood cholesterol will be. High blood cholesterol levels contribute to a large number of health problems, and eventually lead to the congestion of blood vessels. This condition ultimately results in the likely occurrence of heart attack and stroke. Taking lecithin, however, can help you avoid facing these problems. As lecithin supports fat metabolism and aids in reducing cholesterol levels, it may help to protect you against heart attacks and strokes.

Choline, in its dietary supplement form, is commonly recommended for treating nerve, liver and a variety of other health conditions. It has also been used to treat degenerative conditions such as memory loss and multiple sclerosis.

As a treatment for memory loss or impairment, many nutritionally oriented doctors believe that lecithin or phosphatidylcholine serves as a valuable nerve-building nutrient. Phospholipids serve as a major structural component of brain cells; because of this, lecithin may help slow or even reverse memory loss.

While lecithin plays an important role in commercial food preparation, there is so much more to this beneficial element. Lecithin is a key ingredient in everything from keeping a stronger heart to building better memory. Make lecithin part of your recipe for good health.