

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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**The New “Spacey” Pill That May Help You Lose Weight**

While “omega” may sound like something out of a Star Trek episode, it’s really something called a polyunsaturated fatty acid (PUFA). There are 2 main kinds of PUFAs: omega-3 and omega-6. Both are needed for health and growth. While omega-3 has been praised for its health benefits, we have been warned about too much omega-6. They might help cause heart disease, asthma, some cancers, arthritis, and depression. But it seems now that one of the omega-6 fatty acids—conjugated linoleic acid (CLA)—may have some health benefits. CLA may help you lose fat, lower your cholesterol, and improve your immune system. It also may help prevent breast and colon cancer.

While some articles describe only the benefits, others talk about the potential problems—and sometimes they conflict. Some articles say that CLA supplements may actually increase glucose levels and decrease insulin sensitivity. These changes can cause or worsen diabetes in some people. Increasing CLA through pills also may lead to heart disease. Too much whole milk adds lots of calories and cholesterol, not to mention the saturated fat. Make sure that you talk to a doctor or pharmacist before taking CLA supplements or making big diet changes.

In our normal diets, we are not able to convert enough of the dangerous omega-6s into CLA for it to do us any good. But if we do not have enough CLA in our bodies, our food fat won’t get burned as energy. If it isn’t used for energy it becomes what you see on your problem areas (hips, waist, and thighs).

CLA can be found in beef, lamb, and dairy fats. You must drink whole milk in order to get the benefit. Also, the amount of CLA you get depends on what the animal eats: cattle that graze on grass produce 500% more CLA than cows that eat grain! Products from grass-fed cows are harder to find and often cost more. The CLA you get from meat and dairy only helps the

immune system. There have been many reports that drinking milk high in CLA reduces the risk of breast and colon cancer. CLA might be able to reduce extra body fat. Extra fat is thought to increase the risk of cancer. CLA is also able to decrease inflammation, which also helps prevent cancer

While making a stronger immune system is a definitely a good thing, most interest is in weight loss from CLA. This benefit can only really be received by taking CLA pills. CLA supplements might be able to reduce fat *and* preserve muscle. A study found that when the dieters stopped dieting and gained back weight, those taking CLA were more likely to gain muscle, not fat. But for weight loss, you need to take 3.4 g, or 3400 mg, per day. That means taking 4 capsules every day. Even then, this only leads to a few pounds of weight loss a *year*! On one internet site, 180 pills of CLA cost \$39.99. If you have to take 4 pills every day, one bottle will last 45 days. In one year, you will spend \$319.92 for just a few pounds!

Some other possible benefits might be: increase in metabolic rate, decrease in abdominal fat, enhanced muscle growth, maintaining normal cholesterol and triglyceride levels, helping maintain current weight, lowering insulin resistance, and reducing allergic reactions to foods.

The CLA supplement does not require a prescription. It is available at health food stores and online. There are many brand names, but most come in 1000 mg capsules. CLA can cost a lot, isn't very convenient, and there's no guarantee that you'll get much benefit. Rather than be a guinea pig for untested methods just yet, wait until more research has been done. Then we'll know how much and what form will really help.

CLA alone will not help you to lose weight. You still need to be on a balanced, reduced-calorie diet. And make sure exercise is part of your day. The following is a recipe that packs a double punch for better health. Salmon is an excellent source of omega-3, which promotes heart-health, and by using whole milk from grass-fed cows you may improve your immune system!

### **SALMON LOAF**

1 (14.75 ounce) can salmon, undrained

1/2 cup bread crumbs (preferably whole wheat)

1/2 cup milk

1 egg white

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1/2 tsp. salt and pepper to taste,

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). In a mixing bowl, combine the salmon, bread crumbs, milk, egg, salt, pepper, and vegetable oil. Mix thoroughly. Press the salmon mixture into a lightly greased 9x5 inch loaf pan. Bake in a preheated oven for 45 minutes or until done.

Serves 3-4.

This article was written by Colleen Treep, Pharmacy Intern from University of Florida.

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