

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Facing the upcoming holidays, and all the extra eating that goes with them, many people are looking now for the latest weight loss promise. Of course, there are plenty of promises. The question is "Will we get our money's worth?" One of the latest promisers is CLA, or Conjugated Linoleic Acid. What's the scoop on this?

Actually CLA has been around for some years now. It's available in health food stores, mainly as a supplement to boost athletic performance. But more recently it's being promoted for weight loss and reducing body fat, to prevent heart disease, to boost immunity and lower cancer risk, as well as other 'benefits'. Unfortunately, there's not a lot of good medical evidence to support any of these claims. That might not be quite as surprising when you learn what CLA really is. It's a type of *trans fat*!

Some CLA is made naturally in ruminant animals. These include cattle, goats and sheep. The bacteria in their guts produce this *trans fat* and the animals store it in their fat. So every time we eat beef, mutton, lamb or goat, we are eating a little CLA. It's also found in whole milk and cheese made from whole milk. And yet we're still gaining weight, suffering from heart disease, cancer and all the other problems. Our bodies do not make CLA, and we're not really sure what it does to us.

However, there are some studies of CLA in test tubes and lab animals that have suggested that it might actually be a benefit instead of a problem. For instance, there's a report that people who used more CLA lost a little bit more weight. Another said that people who have higher levels of CLA in their body fat have fewer heart attacks. A

Chinese study found that CLA supplements helped to lower blood pressure in obese people. But a study in the Netherlands found just the opposite, that there was no effect on blood pressure or cholesterol.

It's about the same for all the other claims. For every study that says Yeah! there are others that say Nay! There are several possible reasons why this might be. For one thing, a lot of the studies used bacteria, separate cells or animals. What works in a mouse might not work in me. Maybe the pigs' cancer is caused in a different way. Some of the studies used cancer cells growing in test tubes. They can react differently when they're not in somebody's body.

Another reason why there could be such different results is that not all CLA is the same. The CLA in the cattle or goats is one kind. But it's difficult and expensive to raise enough of these animals to get the fat to extract the CLA to use for the studies. So, a lot of CLA used in the tests comes from plants instead of animals. They can make CLA from sunflower or safflower oil. But this CLA is slightly different. It might not look different in a test tube, but our cells can tell the difference. It might be used differently in our bodies.

That is a big part of the problem with the CLA supplements, the pills and capsules for sale. Most of them are made with plant oils, not the animal fats that seem to be more beneficial. A more serious problem is that in some test animals CLA supplements caused liver damage. Others found that the supplements caused more inflammation instead of less. One report said that using CLA made animals and people less sensitive to their insulin. These could all be serious problems, yet the supplements promise weight loss! What you get in the bottle of pills might not be what was used in

the studies they refer to in the ads.

If you want to increase your CLA in the hopes it might have some of the benefits and few of the problems, stick to lean beef, goat or lamb. Here's a recipe that will serve the family without breaking the budget. Add some veggies and a salad, some fruit for dessert, and dinner's ready. Go for a daily walk to burn off extra holiday cookies!

Beef Stroganoff

12 oz egg noodles or fettuccini	2 Tbsp butter or margarine
1 pound beef stew meat in bite-size pieces	½ medium onion, chopped
8 oz fresh mushrooms (or 15-oz can)	½ tsp salt
¼ tsp pepper	2 Tbsp butter or margarine
3 Tbsp all-purpose flour	1 cup beef broth
1 cup sour cream or reduced fat sour cream	

Wash and trim fresh mushrooms if using. Drain canned mushrooms. Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and keep warm. Melt 2 Tbsp butter in large skillet. Add beef and fresh mushrooms, onions, salt and pepper. Cook and stir until beef is completely cooked. Spoon beef and mushrooms into bowl. Mix remaining butter and flour into juices in pan until smooth. Stir in broth and canned mushrooms if using. Cook until hot and thickened. Add beef and sour cream. Heat but do not boil. Spoon over warm pasta and serve hot. Serves 6.