
DLPA (DL-Phenylalanine)

Nature's Natural Pain Killer

DLPA is a depression fighting mixture that combines two forms of the amino acid, phenylalanine. The L-portion of phenylalanine, found in protein-rich foods, bolsters mood-elevating chemicals in the brain, specifically dopamine and nor-epinephrine, while the "D" form of phenylalanine is made synthetically in a laboratory. It appears to block a nervous system enzyme that amplifies pain signals. In other words, DLPA may prevent the breakdown of the brain's natural pain relieving chemicals. This one-two punch can relieve minor episodes of depression and chronic pain syndromes. The DLPA combo is preferable to the pure L-form, which has been associated with increases in blood pressure.

Studies show that DLPA can be an effective part of an overall program to beat the blues, increase mental alertness, improve focus and concentration and thus may be a useful supplement for individuals with attention deficit disorders. Its pain and mood elevating effects make DLPA useful for PMS and chronic pain conditions like fibromyalgia and osteoarthritis.

Health Benefits

Research indicates that DLPA can be an effective part of an overall program for chronic pain and mild depression, including the mood swings of premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Because of the increase in nor-epinephrine, DLPA may increase energy and mental alertness, as well as heighten the ability to focus in individuals with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

In one study, Parkinson's disease patients experienced some relief from symptoms when taking DLPA.

Specifically, DLPA may help to:

- Ease depression. Several clinical studies have been done to examine the effect of DLPA supplements on mood. In one trial, 12 of 20 depressed men and women who took 75 to 200 mg of DLPA a day reported being free of depression after nearly three weeks of treatment, and four reported feeling somewhat better. For relief from the blues, DLPA appears to be most effective when combined with other natural antidepressants, such as St. John's wort or nutritional supplements SAMe and 5-HTP. One smart approach might be to try one of these other widely tested dietary supplements first, and then add DLPA to the mix if depression persists.
- Alleviate chronic pain. Although more research is needed, there is some evidence that DLPA can help to relieve certain types of chronic pain, including the muscle aches of fibromyalgia and persistent arthritis-related pain. The supplement appears to block the actions of a pain-inducing protein called enkephalinase. Some scientists speculate that DLPA also helps by boosting the effectiveness of narcotics and other pain medications you might take.

Research has shown that DLPA may be a more effective pain reliever when combined with the nutritional supplement GABA (gamma aminobutyric acid), a sedating amino acid that also blocks pain signals in the brain.

Dosage Information

- For relief of depression: 1,000-1,500 mg a day, taken in the morning, on an empty stomach
- For chronic pain: Up to 1,500 mg daily, taken on an empty stomach
- For ADD: 1,000-1,500 mg. a day, take in the morning, on an empty stomach

Special Tips

- Look for formulations that contain both the "D" and "L" forms of the amino acid phenylalanine. This combination is less likely to lead to high blood pressure than using the natural "L" form alone.
- If you have high blood pressure, start with very low amounts, such as 100 mg a day. Increase the dose slowly and only under a doctor's supervision.
- As is the case with most dietary supplements, DLPA has not been studied in pregnant or breast-feeding women, children, or those with kidney or liver disease. The proper dose in these groups has not been established.

Guidelines for Use

- As with other amino acid supplements, it's best to take DLPA on an empty stomach with water or juice about an hour before meals. High-protein foods, in particular, can interfere with proper absorption.
- Store in a cool, dry place, such as a closet shelf, away from heat, light, and moisture. (Avoid the humid bathroom medicine cabinet).

General Interaction

- Because DLPA exerts its effects through the central nervous system, avoid taking it with antidepressants or stimulants, unless specifically instructed to do so by your doctor.
- As with other amino acids, DLPA may interfere with the effects of levodopa, a drug commonly used to treat Parkinson's disease. Don't combine the two.

Possible Side Effects

- At recommended doses, DLPA occasionally causes mild side effects, such as heartburn, nausea, or headaches. This can be prevented by taking it with a glass of water. At excessive doses (more than 1,500 mg a day), it can cause numbness, tingling, or other signs of nerve damage.
- DLPA may have the unwanted effect of raising blood pressure, although the D, L combination form is less likely to do so than supplements containing only the "L" form of the amino acid.

Cautions

- If you have high blood pressure or are prone to anxiety or panic attacks, DLPA could aggravate your condition. Let your doctor know if signs or symptoms worsen while taking DLPA.
- Pregnant women should not take DLPA, since it has not been well studied in this group. If you are planning to become pregnant, let your doctor know.
- If you have been diagnosed with malignant melanoma, a potentially deadly form of skin cancer, some doctors caution against taking DLPA. There has been some concern that phenylalanine could stimulate the cancer cells, although the connection, if any, remains unclear.
- Even though DLPA is a potent depression fighter, it should not be used for this condition at the expense of other health-promoting strategies, such as exercise and a healthy diet.

General Drug / Nutrient Interactions

DLPA may exert its effects through the central nervous system, so avoid taking it with other antidepressants or nervous system stimulants without the supervision of a physician familiar with nutritional medicine. Because L-phenylalanine competes with other amino acids when absorbed in the body, DLPA should not be taken with protein foods.