

## Alpha-Who?

Alpha-lipoic acid (ALA) is one of those nutrients which isn't well known, but should be. It's a wonderful antioxidant, and is soluble both in water and fat, which is unusual. It assists both vitamins C and E in their antioxidant function, and it also assists with the uptake of glucose into cells, which means that it has a role to play in treatment of diabetes. Early experiments with ALA included one where it was administered intravenously to patients with severe liver disease, and almost all recovered their liver function.

While the usual dose of ALA is 100-200mg per day, in higher doses, it has been used to treat diabetics who have neuropathy. This is a painful, chronic condition where feeling and function of the hands and feet is gradually lost. It can be dangerous, as the nerves no longer give signals to the brain, and burns and injuries can occur. There are pharmaceutical drugs to treat it, but most have side-effects.

Several German research studies have been carried out and 600mg per day of ALA has been found to reverse some neuropathies, and to reduce pain. The nice thing about ALA is that it is very safe, has few side-effects which are rarely seen, is relatively cheap (compared to the full cost of drugs), and has several useful benefits for human health.

There have also been rat studies which indicate that ALA may have some benefits both for Alzheimer's Disease and Parkinson's when combined with the amino acid L-carnitine. Not only that, but it is also a good chelating agent for heavy metals, particularly mercury, helping to detox your body.

If you are diabetic or have another chronic health condition and thinking of taking ALA, you need to remember that you should be monitored by a medical professional, as it can improve blood sugar control and have other benefits, which may mean that your current medication level may need to be altered.

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[Advice in these columns is of a general nature only and is not to be taken as specific treatment.]