

Essential Fatty Acids For Superimmunity

"[Superimmunity for Kids](#)" by Leo Galland, M.D. with Dian Dincin Buchman, Ph.D. is an excellent book on child nutrition and maintaining a healthy immune system.

Through his research and clinical work, Dr. Galland has found that [essential fatty acids](#) (EFAs) are critical to a healthy immune system. He says "we are in the midst of a nationwide epidemic of EFA deficiencies that is undermining the health of our children." EFAs are essential because your child needs them to be healthy and his/her body can't make them. They must be supplied by the diet.

There are numerous health problems associated with EFA deficiencies. These include hair loss, eczema-like skin eruptions, susceptibility to infections, arthritis-like conditions, liver or kidney degeneration, growth retardation and vision or learning problems.

It's important to know about the different types of fats so you can give your child the good fats and avoid the harmful ones. Fatty acids come in two varieties: saturated and unsaturated. Saturated fats come from animal products such as meat and dairy. These fats are not essential since your child's body makes all (s)he needs. All saturated fats are totally unnecessary and unhealthy. They just clog up your child's arteries and interfere with his/her ability to use EFAs efficiently. Most vegetable oils are unsaturated. But be very careful about vegetable oils. Not all unsaturated fatty acids are essential. If your child eats a lot of unsaturated fatty acids that are nonessential, they can interfere (even more than saturated fats) with his/her body's ability to use the EFAs.

Unfortunately, many of the popular oils used today are nonessential fats and many are hydrogenated. Hydrogenation is a manufacturing process which converts unsaturated fats into saturated fats to prolong shelf life. Read the labels of foods you buy in the grocery store. Hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated vegetable oils are found in margarine, shortening, commercial baked goods and processed foods. Partial hydrogenation physically alters any EFAs in the oil which creates artificial fatty acids. Dr. Galland states that "These artificial fatty acids are not only unnatural and unnecessary, they can have a disastrous effect on your child's body's ability to use EFAs."

There are two kinds of EFAs: omega-6 is found in [safflower](#), sunflower, corn and [evening primrose oils](#). The other is omega-3. [Flaxseeds](#) are rich in omega-3 EFAs. Walnuts and soybeans also contain significant amounts as well as freshly ground wheat germ. Whole or ground up flaxseeds can be found in bulk at most health food stores. Dried beans, such as great northern, kidney, navy and soybeans are inexpensive sources of both omega-6 and omega-3 EFAs. Certain fish are very rich in EFAs. The body can convert EFAs from fish more easily than other forms. The best fish are salmon, tuna, mackerel, bluefish, sardines and herring.

Sometimes it's hard to get your children to eat enough of the above foods. Flaxseed oil is one of the best and most practical ways to supply EFAs to children. It should be organic, unrefined and expeller or cold-pressed (made without added heat). Flaxseed oil has very little taste and most children will take it by the spoonful at the following doses depending on age:

- One to two years - 1 teaspoon a day
- Two to three years - 2 teaspoons a day
- Three and up - 1 tablespoon a day

You can use it in salad dressings or mix it in with your child's favorite foods. You can rub no more than 1 teaspoon a day of flaxseed oil into your baby's skin and it will be absorbed. This can be started when your baby is six months old. Flaxseed oil, like any other oil, needs to be refrigerated and tightly covered in a dark container. Throw it out if it tastes even slightly bitter, since it is rancid. Do not use it as a cooking oil because heat will destroy the EFAs. Flaxseeds can be used in baking and other dishes. Be creative and you will find what works best for your child.