



**GROWN** in Mesopotamia at the dawn of civilization, flaxseed carries a venerable reputation—it energized the ancient Greeks, sustained the legions of the Roman Empire, and inspired Charlemagne to decree its cultivation and consumption throughout Europe. But just because it was good for the ancients, does that mean it's good for us too?

Absolutely, according to health experts. The seed of this blue-flowering plant that flourishes on Canada's western prairies is packed with disease-fighting nutrients and fiber. Flaxseed is particularly rich in two essential fatty acids that our bodies can't make: omega-3s (alpha-linolenic acid, or ALA) and lignans, which are natural antioxidants. The omega-3s in flax help remove toxins from the body and help prevent heart disease and inflammation. The lignans, known for their aid in preventing certain cancers, provide up to 700 times the amount of fiber found in legumes or whole grains. The fiber fights "bad" cholesterol and type 2 diabetes. Omega-3s and lignans are critical components for every single membrane in the body—a fact that deserves our attention.

Herb Joiner-Bey, ND, author of *The Healing Power of Flax*, cites important

# the flax of life

Separate flax from fiction with expert tips for getting big health benefits from this tiny seed **By Tina Rubin**

flax studies involving cancers, including a recent four-year study at Duke University. Men scheduled for prostate cancer surgery began a 30-day low-fat diet that included 2 heaping teaspoons of flaxseed. The regimen halted tumor growth and cancer cells self-destructed.

Udo Erasmus, PhD, author of *Fats That Heal, Fats That Kill*, notes that 99 percent of the population doesn't get enough omega-3s. "Maintain the deficiency long enough and you die," Erasmus says. When we increase the amount of omega-3s through flaxseed or a flaxseed-oil blend, every major degenerative condition improves, from cardiac and autoimmune functions to allergies and digestion. And there are myriad side benefits, including healthy skin, hair, and nails; a 40 to 60 percent improvement in athletic performance; enhanced learning ability; more rapid healing; and better brain development.

Whether adding the seed, oil, or both to our diets, shopping for flax

calls for good judgment. Whole seeds often come in prepackaged containers, but if they're stored in bins, check that the bins are covered and contain no moisture. Whole flaxseeds can be stored for months in an airtight container in a cool, dark place; grind them in a coffee grinder as needed.

Ground or milled seed can be found in vacuum-sealed packages on the shelf or in the refrigerated section of your grocery store. Once you've opened the package, keep it tightly sealed in the refrigerator or freezer. Flaxseed oil, which is five times more

sensitive to heat, light, and oxygen than cooking oils, requires extra care. A glass bottle is safest. The oil must not be used for cooking, as it will become rancid—but it can be mixed into heated foods with no ill effects. Refrigerate or freeze the oil after opening.

The Latin name for flaxseed, *Linum usitatissimum*, translates as "most useful." Apparently those Romans knew the score—and thank goodness we do too. ♦

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
You can now enjoy flaxseeds in a cracker form, available at health food stores. Try: Foods Alive Flax Crackers.

## product examples (from left)

SPECTRUM NATURALS ORGANIC GROUND PREMIUM FLAXSEED is a perfect choice for a dietary fiber supplement to encourage proper digestion and regularity, with the added benefit of omega-3s and lignans.

UDO'S CHOICE UDO'S OIL 3-6-9 BLEND provides just the right balance of essential fatty acids from flax, sesame, sunflower, and evening primrose oils, and has a pleasant, nutty taste.

BEVERI ORGANIC GOLDEN FLAXSEED offers a natural source of ALA omega-3s and omega-6s in a 4:1 balance. Add to soups, breads, salads and more.



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