

GLA every day... ...keeps PMS away

GLA, found in natural Borage Oil, helps women cope with premenstrual breast pain, bloating, depression and irritability

By Kim Sigurdson, Nutritionist

Laura J. is an active 45 year-old woman who enjoys a successful career as a real estate agent. She loves to ride horses and spend time with her husband, family and friends. For 5 to 7 days every month, however, Laura is a different woman. She is apathetic towards job and family and she snaps at people around her. Breast pain (mastalgia) and severe abdominal cramps prevent her from functioning normally. Weight gain of 3 to 4 pounds during the premenstrual phase of her cycle leave her feeling bloated and uncomfortable. Laura, like millions of other women, suffers from Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS).



more cramps, no more bloating. Borage Oil has allowed Laura to enjoy life fully – every day of the month. Like Laura, many other women may benefit from the positive effects of Borage Oil. To understand how this treatment works, we need to first understand the nature of PMS.

Understanding PMS

PMS is a recurrent cyclic disorder most often occurring 7 to 10 days prior to menses, and disappearing at the onset of menses. Up to 90% of women may experience some physical, emotional, or behavioural premenstrual symptoms.¹ Physical symptoms may include bloating, abdominal and back cramps and discomfort, change in appetite, weight gain, breast tenderness and pain, and headache. Behavioural changes may include anxiety, depression, lethargy, hypersomnia or insomnia, moodiness, irritability,



ty, anger, and social withdrawal. In addition, as women increase in age, so does their risk of developing severe PMS.²

Although PMS was once considered a “psychological problem”, there is now a clear association between PMS and the cyclical hormonal rhythms of the menstrual cycle.



Furthermore, it is now believed that PMS probably has a hormonal or biochemical basis.² A number of theories have been proposed in an attempt to explain the onset of symptoms, even though the specific cause of PMS is not entirely clear. Of the theories proposed are deficiencies in the hormone progesterone, the mineral magnesium, the vitamin pyridoxine (vitamin B6) as well as oversensitivity to the hormone prolactin.² A very interesting theory, however, is that many symptoms associated with PMS may be a result of a deficiency in Gamma Linolenic Acid (GLA).

GLA and PMS

GLA is an Essential Fatty Acid found in “good” oils such as Borage (also known as Starflower), Evening Primrose, and Black Currant. GLA is a polyunsaturated fat that must be obtained from dietary sources. A healthy body creates GLA by converting dietary Linoleic Acid (LA) found in many processed foods, margarine, and vegetable oils. The body metabolizes GLA into hormone-like compounds that regulate body processes at the cellular level.

In women with PMS, however, the initial conversion of dietary Linoleic Acid to GLA is often impaired.² The result is a lower level of GLA and its metabolites in the tissue.

Research done in the last 20 years shows that women deficient in GLA are over-sensitive to the hormone prolactin, which may result in breast pain.² Supplementation with GLA creates hormone-like compounds that “switch off” some of the effects of prolactin, resulting in a decrease in breast pain.⁴

A deficiency in GLA may also be responsible for many other PMS symptoms such as depression and irritability, and fluid retention.⁴ Furthermore, research has shown that a deficiency in Essential Fatty Acids in general appears to make various body tis-

ues, in addition to breast tissue, so sensitive that they respond abnormally to reproductive hormones.²

GLA supplementation is therefore a good choice for women who suffer from these uncomfortable and painful symptoms. Unlike conventional PMS treatments, GLA is a naturally derived supplement that has been proven safe and effective in a number of disease conditions. Ongoing research continues to show the beneficial effects of GLA in PMS.

Getting the GLA you need

The best source of GLA is Borage (or Starflower) Oil, which contains up to 23% GLA. Evening Primrose Oil (8-10% GLA) and Black Currant Oil (15-17% GLA) are other sources of GLA. Because of the higher concentration of GLA in Borage, a

patient may consume fewer capsules overall to achieve the required dosage. This allows the patient to consume the least amount of supplemental calories and fat possible. It also makes Borage Oil the most economical source of GLA.

I recommend a starting dose of 480 to 960 mg of GLA per day – that’s two to four grams of Borage Oil every day of your cycle. However, some women experience improvements with as little as one gram of Borage Oil per day and others may need up to six. Allow at least three months of continuous supplementation to determine whether your dosage is working for you. Increase the dosage after three months if your symptoms persist. There is no danger in “overdosing” – studies have shown that Borage Oil is safe and non-toxic, even in large amounts.

References:

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Address: 102 Melville Street, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, CANADA S7J 0R1.
Phone: (306) 975-1166 Fax: (306) 242-3829
Website: www.bioriginal.com

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