

## Flax facts

Flax, a tall, leafy-stemmed plant with shiny blue or white flowers contains flat golden or brown

seeds that are full of nutrients. It now grows wild in this area, although 100 years ago, it was cultivated similar to that of ancient times.

Woven flax cloth was

found in the Egyptian tombs and from Hippocrates on, flax has been used medicinally.

Decades ago, it was used as glue, homemade hair gel, and as paint (linseed) oil. Recently, flax has been shown to assist memory, boost cerebral function, support the body's inflammatory response and help with "woman problems".

Flax contains essential fatty acids, soluble and insoluble fiber, proteins, vitamins, lignans and other phytonutrients.



**DR. J.E.  
BLOCK**

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Flax oil is an abundant source of alpha-linolenic acid, which is converted to the healthy Omega 3's in our bodies -- the same type found in cold-water fish, like salmon, mackerel and herring. It has a powerful cardiovascular effect, not only lowering total cholesterol and triglycerides, but also raising the HDL cholesterol. Moreover, Omega 3's decrease the coagulation of blood and may prevent heart attacks and strokes. Flax seeds contain 10 grams of fiber in 1/4 cup. Fiber acts as a broom, cleaning out the intestines, not only promoting regularity, but decreasing the incidence of colonic polyps, cancer, diverticulosis and diverticulitis. More than that, lignans support one's immune system. These are low-glycemic carbohydrates which slow the absorption of higher glycemic carbs.

I recommend two tablespoons or more of ground flax a day. It is safe for everyone, but because of its mild laxative effect, it may bother some folks with irritable bowel syndrome. Allergies to this health food are almost unknown. Golden or

brown whole flaxseed is sold inexpensively and may have slightly more nutrient value. Foods that contain whole seeds, like cereals such as Uncle Sam's do little good for our health. It is far better to buy ground seeds, or best, whole flax seed and grind them in an inexpensive coffee grinder. Ground flax meal should be consumed within a day, or refrigerated in an air-tight opaque container, where it will keep for several months. When it spoils, it smells like paint oil.

Flax meal has a sweet nutty flavor and tastes delicious sprinkled over cereals, soups and salads, or when used for baking in casseroles and breads. Ground flax mixes easily with juices. I do not recommend the use of flax seed oil, which is available in liquid or capsules. Not only is it more expensive and less palatable than flax meal, but it does not have the fiber, phytonutrients or lignans found in the whole seed preparation. Ground flax meal is not to be eaten plain since it will firmly cake on the roof of the mouth and can be difficult to remove.