

Flaxseed - A Quiet Achiever

Dietary flaxseed has an impressive and growing research literature supporting its use in a variety of health conditions. You may have noticed a small quantity of flaxseed, the dark brown seeds bakers add to bread, many will see as decorative, but there is a good health reason for their inclusion that actually stems from some research carried out in Melbourne.

We now know what diseases flaxseed can treat or prevent, the health impacts flaxseed can provide, the bioactives within flaxseed that provide these health-related effects in many cases and the forms of flaxseed that are required to provide these bioactives to the body.

Primarily flaxseed is a rich source of the omega-3 fatty acid, alpha linolenic acid, the lignan secoisolariciresinol diglucoside and fibre. These compounds provide bioactivity of value to the health of humans through their anti-inflammatory action, anti-oxidative capacity and fat modulating properties.



Specifically, the current evidence on the benefits or limitations of flaxseed in a variety of cardiovascular diseases, cancer, gastro-intestinal health and brain development and function, as well as hormonal status in menopausal women, are comprehensive topics for discussion.

There are many areas in which flaxseed has been shown to be beneficial:

- **Omega-3 essential fatty acids**, "good" fats that have been shown to have [heart](#)-healthy effects
Each tablespoon of ground flaxseed contains about 1.8 grams of plant omega-3s
- **Lignans** Flaxseed contains 75 to 800 times more lignans than other plant foods that may help prevent breast cancer*
- **Fibre** Flaxseed contains both the soluble and insoluble types
- **Blood triglycerides** (fats) are kept low.

*Lignan research at RMIT University showed there were benefits for controlling hormonal response in postmenopausal women. This research promoted the incorporation of flaxseed in bread.

For the past 40 years Judy and I have added a teaspoon of flaxseed oil to our breakfast to which we have added an occasional deserts spoon of flaxmeal. Blood plasma analysis shows this provides a significant level of omega-3 and lignans in our blood stream.

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