

Alpha-Lipoic Acid

Also called ALA or thioctic acid | Other Dietary Supplements

What Is It?

Alpha-lipoic acid is a substance your body makes to help turn food into energy. It is also sold as a supplement, often promoted for nerve pain and blood sugar control. [1]

Why People Take It - And How Strong the Research Is

Nerve pain caused by diabetes | RESULTS ARE MIXED. Some shorter studies found symptom relief. However, a 2024 Cochrane review found that ALA probably made little or no difference to symptoms after six months. It has not been established as a way to reverse nerve damage. [2,3]

Blood sugar control | NO CLEAR, RELIABLE BENEFIT. Studies have not consistently shown useful improvements. ALA should not replace insulin or other diabetes medicines. [3]

What these labels mean: They summarize the research for each use. They do not predict whether it will help you personally or whether it is safe for you.

Regular ALA Or R-ALA: Is One Better?

What is the difference? Regular ALA usually contains equal amounts of two forms called R and S. R-ALA contains only the R form, which your body naturally makes. [1]

Should I use only R-ALA for diabetic nerve pain? There is not convincing evidence that it relieves nerve pain better than regular ALA. R-ALA may be absorbed differently, but better absorption does not prove better symptom relief. Much of the clinical research used the regular R/S mixture. The evidence does not establish that you need to switch or pay more for R-ALA. [1,2]

Side Effects And Important Safety Concerns

Possible side effects include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or a skin rash. ALA may lower blood sugar, especially when taken with insulin or other diabetes medicines. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about monitoring when starting it or changing products or doses. Do not adjust prescribed medicines on your own. [1,3]

Review all medicines and supplements with a pharmacist. Talk with your doctor before use during pregnancy or breastfeeding. Keep supplements away from children; large overdoses can be dangerous. [1]

Questions To Ask Your Doctor Or Pharmacist

Is ALA worth trying for my symptoms? Which product and dose should I use? How long should I try it? What improvement should I track? Could it cause low blood sugar with my medicines?

Where To Find Additional Information

1. [Oregon State University, Linus Pauling Institute - Lipoic Acid](#)
2. [Cochrane - Alpha-lipoic acid for diabetic nerve damage \(2024\)](#)
3. [NIH / NCCIH - Diabetes and Dietary Supplements](#)

Sources checked October 17, 2026. This guide is for learning, not for diagnosing or treating an illness. Talk with your healthcare provider before changing prescribed treatment.