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## L-Tryptophan

**CAUTION---**Anyone on a selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitor such as Prozac (fluoxetine), Paxil (paroxetine), Zoloft (sertraline), Effexor (venlafaxine) or any other antidepressant, should NOT take L-tryptophan. The combination can lead to a life threatening condition called serotonin syndrome.

L-tryptophan is an amino acid.

It has two major uses. One is to relieve depression and the other is to enhance sleep.

Amino acids are the building blocks of proteins. Milk and turkey are particularly rich in L-tryptophan. However, there is not enough L-tryptophan to provide a dramatic effect in those foods and so for people who are depressed or having trouble sleeping we will use supplemental L-tryptophan.

### **Impurities in l-tryptophan caused disability and death**

In about 1985 the Japanese company which made the world's tryptophan changed their manufacturing process. This introduced impurities in the L-tryptophan which caused a severe illness in some patients receiving this supplement. As a result, L-tryptophan was removed from the market. The manufacturing errors were rectified and at this time l-tryptophan is again available without prescription.

### **5-hydroxy-tryptophan**

While L-tryptophan was unavailable, a similar substance, 5-hydroxy-tryptophan was available and was sold as a supplement. While 5-hydroxy-tryptophan is one step closer to serotonin than is l-tryptophan is, it does not cross the blood-brain barrier well. It is less effective for depression or poor sleep.

### **L-tryptophan Interaction with Other Nutrients**

The body requires vitamin B6 to change l-tryptophan into serotonin. The body also uses l-tryptophan to make niacinamide. So when we use l-tryptophan supplements we always give niacinamide with it to shut down the niacinamide pathway in favor of serotonin production.

Niacinamide, by the way, is different from niacin. It doesn't cause the flushing and it does not have the cholesterol lowering effects of niacin. However, niacin will not help l-tryptophan improve depression or sleep either.

Again, increasing levels of serotonin will improve mood. Serotonin is made into melatonin which improves sleep. L-tryptophan therefore improves these functions through enhancing natural processes.

### **Dosage**

#### === Sleep

For sleep, we usually recommend L-tryptophan about ½ hour before bedtime in a dose starting at about 2000 mg. If required, we will increase dose up to 4000 mg. A very high percentage of people will fall asleep at that dose. Along with L-tryptophan we give 1500 mg of niacinamide and a B<sub>6</sub>-rich B complex..

L-tryptophan can be taken with other sleeping agents such as melatonin or Benadryl (diphenhydramine is the generic name).

L-tryptophan is best absorbed when taken with carbohydrates. That would be a piece of banana, apples, applesauce, any fruit, or a couple of crackers. The carbohydrate is going to have somewhat of a sleep inducing effect as well.

#### === Depression

For depression, we use 1500 mg of L-tryptophan in the morning as well, again with 1500 mg of niacinamide, and a B complex tablet or capsule.

It takes one to four weeks for twice a day L-tryptophan to improve depressive symptoms.

### **Depression, A Reminder**

No treatment works all the time for everybody. Depression can be life threatening. Get help from a competent professional.