

New Research Focuses On Little-Known Nutrient

by Wendy H. Weiss, MA, RD

(NAPSA)—There's a wealth of information available about the powerful nutrients found in fruits and vegetables. People who are either health conscious, vegetarians or limit the meat intake in their diet, may also need to be aware of the value of beneficial nutrients found in the meat, fish and poultry sources of the diet.

A nutrient beginning to pop up on the nutrition radar screen is L-Carnitine. This vitamin-like nutrient is needed in all human and animal cells. L-Carnitine assists metabolism

in the human body by converting fat into energy. Here's how it works: L-Carnitine is part of the shuttle that brings fats into the part of the cell where they are broken down, with the ultimate generation of energy. New exciting human research demonstrates that L-Carnitine supplementation may actually increase the rate at which fat is converted into energy. This finding has many implications for health conditions that are highly prevalent in the United States, most particularly obesity and cardiovascular disease.

Though a Recommended Dietary Allowance has not yet been established, L-Carnitine is conditionally essential in infants (in other words, infants require a dietary source of L-Carnitine because the body's synthesis is inadequate). The adult body produces approximately 20 milligrams of L-Carnitine per day, only about 10 percent used daily by the average person. Additionally, L-Carnitine is found in foods but primarily those of animal origin; fruits and vegetables are practically devoid of this nutrient. The typical Western diet can provide in the region of 100 to 300 mg L-Carnitine per day.

Although L-Carnitine is found in food, several lifestyle factors



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may be associated with the need for supplementation. Vegetarians for example, due to their dietary choices consume a diet that is limited in the natural sources of L-Carnitine. Research continues to indicate that supplemental L-Carnitine is a helpful part of weight-management programs. In addition, for sports enthusiasts and especially "weekend warriors," supplemental L-Carnitine can be invaluable. Individuals with a heart condition and/or a family history of heart disease should seriously consider supplementation with L-Carnitine. Health food stores, pharmacies and supermarkets throughout the U.S. carry L-Carnitine supplements, which generally contain in the range of 50 to 500 milligrams L-Carnitine.

Conditionally essential nutrients, including L-Carnitine may offer the next clues to maintaining health. For more information about L-Carnitine, visit the human nutrition center at www.carnitine.com.

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