

EVENING PRIMROSE

Common Names: *Evening primrose, primrose oil*

Scientific Names: *Oenotherabiennis*

Effectiveness: Limited evidence has shown that evening primrose oil is not effective for the management of rheumatoid arthritis.

Use in rheumatic conditions is not recommended.

Safety: Generally well tolerated for short term use up to 1 year.

What is Evening Primrose?

- Evening primrose belongs to a family of wild flowering plants native to the Americas. The oil from the seeds is used to make medicine.

What it is it used for in people with rheumatic conditions?

- Evening primrose oil has been used to manage of rheumatoid arthritis.

How is it thought to work?

- Evening primrose oil contains an omega-6 essential fatty acid called gamma-linolenic acid. It is involved in regulating inflammation and the immune system.

Does it Work? What the Science Says:

- Most of the trials are small and of poor quality. No significant benefit has been seen in studies.
- Use of evening primrose oil is not recommended for rheumatoid arthritis.

Evening primrose oil:
up to 3 grams per day
(NIH, Natural
Comprehensive)

- Some preliminary evidence suggests that evening primrose oil may reduce the dose of NSAID required.
- However, several systematic reviews found evening primrose oil does not significantly improve pain or functionality score compared to placebo.

What are possible side effects and what can I do about them?

- Generally well-tolerated orally if taken within recommended doses. It can cause stomach upset, nausea, vomiting, a reduced blood pressure, headache, dizziness, and heartburn.

Interactions

With drugs:

- Evening primrose oil may reduce the amount platelets clump together (platelet aggregation). It may interact with anticoagulant/antiplatelet drugs by increasing risk of bruising and/or bleeding.
- Common antiplatelet and anticoagulant drugs include: *warfarin (Coumadin)*, *ASA (Aspirin)*, and *clopidogrel (Plavix)*, *ticagrelor (Brilinta)*, *prasugrel (Effient)*, *enoxaparin (Lovenox)*, *dalteparin (Fragmin)*, *dabigatran (Pradaxa)*, *rivaroxaban (Xarelto)*, *apixaban (Eliquis)* and others.

With other diseases:

- Evening primrose oil can slow blood clotting (antiplatelet effects). This may increase risk of bleeding during surgeries. Stop evening primrose oil at least 2 weeks prior to surgical procedures.
- There are reports that evening primrose may increase risk of seizures in patients with conditions such as epilepsy and schizophrenia who are treated with *phenothiazines* (e.g. chlorpromazine, fluphenazine, prochlorperazine). Until more is known, take evening primrose with caution if you have a seizure disorder or schizophrenia.
- Taking evening primrose oil during pregnancy may increase risk of complications. Avoid in pregnancy.

With other natural health products:

- Evening primrose oil may interact with other natural health products that might affect the amount platelets clump together (called platelet aggregation). This could increase the risk of bleeding.
- Such as: *garlic*, *ginger*, *ginkgo*, *certain types of ginseng*, *red clover*, and others.

For more information about evening primrose oil, consult your physician and pharmacist.