

# GLA for Breast Pain





## GLA for Breast Pain

Breast pain is a common and unpleasant symptom. It often gets better itself, with either no treatment, or with simple painkillers. Ibuprofen gel applied directly to the tender area can be useful as a short term treatment.

However, if the breast pain is slow to settle down, there are other treatment options if needed. Some of these involve hormone blocking drugs which are very effective, but can also give troublesome side effects. Because of this it can be worth having a trial of either Starflower Oil or evening Primrose Oil. These are both rich in a substance called GLA (gamma linoleic acid), which has been found to sometimes help with breast pain. It is poorly understood why this may help with breast pain and some studies have cast doubt on whether it helps or not. However, some people do seem to get benefit from trying it, and it is a simple treatment with few side effects. It can be worth trying.

## Dos and Don'ts

- Starflower Oil and Evening Primrose aren't available on prescription. However, they are not expensive and can be bought in pharmacies.
- It is important to take an adequate dose of Starflower Oil or Evening Primrose Oil. It is thought that a daily dose of GLA should be 240 mg. The ingredients list on the packet in the pharmacy should say how much GLA there is in each capsule, and you may need to take several capsules daily. You need to take the GLA for at least 2 months to see if it helps. (Starflower oil capsules often contain more GLA and it may be possible to just take one capsule daily, which can be more convenient, and therefore you may prefer this option).
- Some capsules have added vitamins. If you have to take several capsules daily there is sometimes the possibility of taking more than the daily recommended dose of a vitamin. Sometimes this doesn't matter but some vitamins can be harmful if too much is taken. So don't take any capsules that include added vitamins.
- Side effects are rare. However:
  - Some people do experience nausea with GLA.
  - There is possibly a small risk of miscarriage with GLA. Because of this it is important not to take it if you are trying to become pregnant, and to use adequate contraception if you are not trying to become pregnant.
  - We advise people with epilepsy not to take GLA (although the evidence for any problem is of uncertain quality).
  - GLA can sometimes increase the tendency to bleed, so if you are taking any blood thinning tablets (such as warfarin), or have a problem with easy bleeding, then you should discuss this with your doctor before taking GLA.
- There are a few interactions with some other drugs, so please check with your doctor if you are unsure.



**Please contact your Breast Clinical Nurse Specialist with any queries or concerns on 01225 824057 from Monday to Friday 08.30am -5pm**

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS  
Foundation Trust  
Combe Park, Bath BA1 3NG  
01225 428331 [www.ruh.nhs.uk](http://www.ruh.nhs.uk)

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison  
Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a  
different format, or would like to feedback your  
experience of the hospital. Telephone 01225  
825656 or Email  
[ruh-tr.PatientAdviceandLiaisonService@nhs.net](mailto:ruh-tr.PatientAdviceandLiaisonService@nhs.net)