

L-Carnosine

L-Carnosine is an antioxidant found in the diet. Although it's mainly found in meat, the supplement form is synthetically produced so is safe for vegetarians.

It protects brain cells, improves age-related memory loss, and successfully treated depression in a clinical trial. It may also help attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, autism (where it improved sleep and hyperactivity), schizophrenia, obsessive compulsive disorder, and dementia.

L-carnosine has antiaging effects in some animals. Potential medical benefits of l-carnosine have been seen in Parkinson's disease, diabetes (where it may prevent nerve damage, cataracts, and kidney problems). It is also used to improve muscle strength and exercise performance.

L-carnosine is also called beta-alanyl-l-histidine. It should not be confused with acetyl-l-carnitine, which also treats depression but has a different mechanism in the body.

How does it work?

L-Carnosine protects brain cells from damage due to stress or aging. It also balances the neurotransmitter glutamate, which is involved in the mechanism of new therapies for depression like ketamine.

How should I take it?

Most psychiatric studies of l-carnosine used 400 mg twice a day. However, that dose is not readily available, but 500 mg capsules are. L-carnosine is usually taken 500 mg twice a day for muscle strength.



Although it is safe to take the entire dose at once, it's best to take L-carnosine twice a day because it has a very short half-life and leaves the body quickly.

Risks and Side Effects

No major risks or side effects are known with L-carnosine supplements.

Pregnancy and breast-feeding: There is not enough reliable information about the safety of taking carnosine if you are pregnant or breast-feeding. Stay on the safe side and avoid use

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What if I forget a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. It's OK to take both doses at once (800 mg) if you miss your morning dose).

How long do I need to take it?

This depends on your diagnosis and which other medications you are taking.

What happens if I stop it?

L-Carnosine does not have known withdrawal problems.

How to purchase

We use Consumer Labs to identify products that are safe and contain the right ingredients, but unfortunately they have not tested L-carnosine products. L-carnosine can be found on Amazon. Reasonably priced options are:

Bestvite 500mg (120 caps \$26)

NOW 500mg (100 caps \$25)

Best Naturals 250mg (180 \$25)

Nutricost 500mg (120 \$32)

Find links to the best priced options at:

www.chrisaikenmd.com/supplements

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 6/28/2025