

NATURE'S BIN

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Progress in Alzheimer's

Nutrients may delay decline, ease symptoms

Vitamin E preserves activities of daily living

In this study across 14 Veterans Affairs Medical Centers, 561 people with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease took 2,000 IU of vitamin E per day, 20 mg per day of the memory-loss drug memantine; these two together, or a placebo. After more than two years of follow-up, compared to placebo, doctors found vitamin E delayed the decline in daily functioning activities by 19 percent, or by more than six months.

Researchers also looked at changes in the amount of caregiver time and found those who took vitamin E alone had the smallest increase in time required of caregivers.

This is the first clinical trial to show an added benefit for vitamin E in mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease and, because vitamin E is inexpensive and readily available, should be part of treatment, doctors said.

Omega-3s slow decline

The brain requires omega-3s and other essential fatty acids, and those with Alzheimer's disease have lower-than-normal concentrations in the brain. In this study, 33 men and women with mild Alzheimer's disease took 2,300 mg of high-DHA omega-3s per day, or a placebo. After six months, while the placebo group had not



changed, those taking omega-3s had higher levels of DHA and EPA in the blood and in cerebrospinal fluid.

The cerebrospinal fluid finding is important in humans, doctors said, because before now they had not known if omega-3 supplements could cross the blood-brain barrier, a membrane network that separates the brain from the circulatory system and protects the central nervous system from harmful chemicals while allowing key nutrients to pass through and nourish the brain.

Doctors also found that as the levels of DHA increased, signs of Alzheimer's disease and inflammation decreased, suggesting omega-3s may be helpful in preserving healthy cognitive and physical function.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION; 2014, VOL. 311, NO. 1, 1810379

APRIL'S

Healthy Insight

An Apple a Day?

British doctors, using a model of the whole U.K. population over age 50, say that adding an apple a day to the diet would delay or prevent about as many deaths from heart attacks and stroke as statin drugs. The study is important because of recent changes in cholesterol guidelines that could more than triple the number of people newly eligible—meaning recommended—to take statin drugs. “The Victorians had it about right with their simple advice, ‘An apple a day keeps the doctor away,’” doctors said, and that in order to help prevent heart disease and stroke, “small changes in the diet can be very effective.”

REFERENCE: BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL; DECEMBER, 2013, PUBLISHED ONLINE

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Maintain the Brain

Nutrients help preserve brain function and memory

What are telomeres?

Cells contain a string of DNA with genetic information. At each end of the string are telomeres; protective caps that keep DNA in order as the cell replicates. Each time cells replicate, telomeres shorten, until there is no telomere left and the cell dies. There is a direct link between telomere length and aging.



Omega-3s slow cell aging

In this telomere study, 33 older adults with mild cognitive impairment took the omega-3s EPA and DHA, or the omega-6 linoleic acid. Doctors gave a high dose of EPA with a low dose of DHA, or the reverse. The daily doses were 1,670 mg EPA plus 160 mg DHA, 1,550 mg DHA plus 400 mg EPA, or 2,200 mg linoleic acid.

After six months, doctors saw an overall trend toward shorter telomeres, but the omega-6 group had the most shortening. Also, in the high-DHA group, as DHA levels increased, telomere shortening decreased.

Doctors said these findings build on recent reports that omega-3s appear to slow the telomere shortening that occurs with age.

Vitamin K1 may improve memory

New evidence suggests vitamin K1 (phylloquinone) may play a role in cognition. In this study, doctors measured vitamin K1 in 320 men and women, aged 70 to 85, who were not cognitively impaired at the time they took several cognitive tests.

Researchers found no differences in making decisions or the speed of processing information. But those with higher levels of vitamin K1 had better episodic memory; remembering events in space and time, such as where you left your keys. Doctors said that vitamin K1 may play a role in the type of memory important in everyday life.

REFERENCE: NUTRITION; SEPTEMBER, 2013, PUBLISHED ONLINE

Healthy Men

Nutrients improve body measures and lower chances of disease

Betaine improves body composition

Betaine is a natural nutrient in shellfish, spinach, beets, and whole grains. In this first betaine study on humans, 23 experienced weight lifters participated in a strict strength training program while taking 2,500 mg of betaine per day, or a placebo.

After the six-week program, compared to placebo, men in the betaine group had a greater increase in lean muscle mass, a bigger decline in percentage of body fat, larger arm size, and greater capacity in bench press.

Study authors said the results suggest adding betaine to sports foods, beverages, and dietary supplements can provide strength-training benefits.

Plant sterols reduce chances of heart attack

Plant sterols from grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and seeds, help lower cholesterol by blocking absorption during digestion, helping the body eliminate cholesterol along with other waste.

In this study, researchers measured the diets in 1,005 men and women, aged 29 to 73, who had had a first heart attack, and compared to 3,148 people who had not. While there was no benefit in women, men who consumed more than 340 mg of plant sterols per day were 29 percent less likely to have a first heart attack compared to men who consumed less than 150 mg of plant sterols per day.

Discussing their findings, doctors said the health benefit came from a small increase in plant sterols, suggesting that even moderate changes in the diet could have an important effect on heart health.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF SPORTS NUTRITION; 2013, VOL. 10, No. 1, 39



Healthy Women

Nutrients improve bone health, slow bone loss

Vitamin D improves bone health

Doctors wanted to test the effects of different doses of vitamin D on bone mineral density. In this study, 265 postmenopausal women aged 60 to 70 took a placebo, 400 IU, or 1,000 IU of vitamin D per day. After one year, vitamin D levels had declined by 11 percent for placebo, increased 94 percent in the low-dose vitamin D group, and increased 129 percent in the high-dose vitamin D group.

Only the high-dose vitamin D group saw a benefit in bone mineral density, which declined by 0.05 percent, compared to 0.57 for the low-dose vitamin D group and 0.60 for placebo.

One month after the study ended,

vitamin D levels continued to decline in all groups, but remained in the normal range for those who had taken vitamin D.

Vitamin K slows bone loss

In Japan, doctors treat osteoporosis with a high, 45-mg daily dose of a type of vitamin K2, menaquinone 4. In this study, researchers gave a placebo or a low daily dose of 1.5 mg of vitamin K2 to 48 postmenopausal Japanese women.

After 12 months, high osteocalcin levels—a sign of vitamin K deficiency and low bone mineral density—had declined in the vitamin K group. Also compared to placebo, the vitamin K group had fewer signs of the protein damage that increases chances for bone fracture. Researchers then measured

bone mineral density of the forearm, which decreased in the placebo group but improved in those taking the low dose of vitamin K2.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF BONE AND MINERAL RESEARCH; 2013, VOL. 28, No. 10, 2202-13



See Clearly

Nutrients reduce chances of cataract in men and women

Multivitamins in men

In cataract, one of the most common causes of age-related blindness, the inner lens of the eye becomes cloudy, preventing light from reaching the



retina. In this large, long-term study of 14,641 male physicians, aged at least 50, participants took a placebo or a daily multivitamin. Over an average follow-up of more than 11 years, compared to placebo, men who had taken multivitamins were 9 percent less likely to have developed cataract, a result doctors said was modest and significant.

Antioxidants reduce cataract in women

Doctors wanted to test how total antioxidants influence cataract, and in this study measured the total antioxidant value in the diets of 30,607 women, aged 49 to 83. Over an average eight years of follow-up, compared to those who got the least, women who consumed the most antioxidants were 13 percent less likely to develop cataract.

Women who got more antioxidants were less likely to be smokers, and other lifestyle differences could have influenced results, researchers said.

Fruits, veggies, vitamins C & E

Researchers measured the diets of 599 men and women, aged at least 65, three in four of whom had cataract. As fruits and vegetables increased, the chances for cataract decreased. Doctors saw a similar pattern for vitamin C. Compared to those who got less than 84 mg of vitamin C per day, those who got up to 408 mg of vitamin C per day were 54 percent less likely to develop cataract. For vitamin E, the chances for cataract began to decline at 12 IU of vitamin E per day.

REFERENCE: OPHTHALMOLOGY; NOVEMBER, 2013, PUBLISHED ONLINE



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Apple Bliss

Simple, scrumptious, and good for you, too! Please see page 1 for a new study that confirms the old saying: “An apple a day keeps the doctor away,” by reducing chances for cardiovascular problems.

Ingredients:

4 medium size, crisp apples
¼ c dried cranberries
4 tsp maple syrup

Optional fillings besides cranberries:

Small amounts of candied ginger, raisins or other dried fruit; chopped nuts, sunflower seeds, peanut butter, dark chocolate, or maple syrup

Directions: Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees with rack in the middle. Place cranberries in a bowl, pour 1 cup of boiling water over them and soak until plump, then drain, reserving liquid. Wash apples and remove most of the core, leaving about 1/4-inch at the bottom. Remove a thin strip of peel from around the cavity then fill with cranberries. Pour a teaspoon of syrup over the cranberries and the top of the apple. Place apples in an 8 x 8 baking dish. Pour the remaining liquid into the bottom of the dish and cover loosely with aluminum foil. Bake for 20 minutes and remove foil. Continue baking uncovered until the apples are soft, an additional 20-30 minutes, until skins become wrinkled and soft. Cool for five minutes and serve.

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