“Stable” Atherothrombosis Still Imperils Health

Patients with stable atherothrombosis are at an alarmingly high risk of death or cardiovascular disease, according to the first study to document the effects of atherothrombosis in outpatients. Atherothrombosis, which occurs when a blood clot (thrombus) forms on a ruptured plaque (atheroma) in a blood vessel wall, is the common link among heart attack, stroke, and peripheral arterial disease.

Data from 68,000 outpatients in 44 countries showed that despite appearing and feeling healthy in many cases, patients with established disease had roughly a one-in-seven chance of death, suffering a heart attack or stroke, or being hospitalized due to cardiovascular disease within one year. Patients with peripheral arterial disease (clogged arteries in the legs or abdomen) were at even greater risk, with a 22% one-year risk of suffering a major cardiovascular event. Those with atherothrombotic disease in three or more locations had a 28% risk of major adverse cardiovascular events.

—Dale Kiefer


Blueberries May Help Prevent Colon Cancer

A compound in blueberries protected laboratory animals from colon cancer, according to presenters at a national meeting of the American Chemical Society. Known as pterostilbene, the compound is an antioxidant similar to resveratrol that could be developed into a preventive nutritional supplement.

After rats were given a known carcinogen to induce colon cancer, half were supplemented with pterostilbene. After eight weeks, the supplemented animals had 57% fewer pre-cancerous colon lesions than the control rats, as well as reduced colon cell proliferation and expression of genes involved in inflammation, which is a risk factor for the disease.

This study, the first to demonstrate pterostilbene’s ability to combat colon cancer, “underscores the need to include more berries in the diet, especially blueberries,” the researchers concluded.

—Dayna Dye


Mediterranean Diet Lowers Childhood Allergy, Asthma

A traditional Mediterranean diet may protect children from developing allergic rhinitis (hay fever) and asthma, according to a recent report.*

Scientists evaluated 690 children, aged 7-18, residing on the island of Crete. The subjects’ parents provided information on the children’s diets and allergy and respiratory symptoms. Adherence to a Mediterranean diet was determined by the intake of 12 foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and olive oil.

Greater adherence to the Mediterranean diet protected against allergic rhinitis and was modestly protective against asthma and skin allergy. Grapes high in antioxidants and resveratrol were especially protective against allergic rhinitis and wheezing, while oranges, apples, and tomatoes were also protective. Eating nuts (which are high in magnesium and vitamin E) at least three times per week halved the risk of wheezing.

—Dayna Dye

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