IN THE NEWS

Broccoli Sprouts Fight Ulcer Bacteria

A recent issue of Cancer Prevention Research published the results of a trial conducted by scientists at the Tokyo University of Science that determined sulforaphane, a compound that occurs in high amounts in broccoli and its sprouts, helps suppress Helicobacter pylori, the bacterium responsible for stomach ulcers and many cases of stomach cancer.*

Akinori Yanaka, MD, PhD, and colleagues divided 48 men and women infected with H. pylori to receive broccoli sprouts or alfalfa sprouts for two months. Helicobacter pylori infection levels were assessed upon enrollment and at the conclusion of the treatment period. While all measures of infection were the same at eight weeks among participants who consumed alfalfa sprouts, they were significantly reduced among those who received broccoli sprouts.

"The highlight of the study is that we identified a food that, if eaten regularly, might potentially have an effect on the cause of a lot of gastric problems and perhaps even ultimately help prevent stomach cancer," co-author Jed Fahey MS, ScD, concluded.

—Dayna Dye


Inadequate Heart Disease Prevention in Europe in Spite of Medication Use

Despite the ever-escalating use of antihypertensive and lipid-lowering drugs, high blood pressure and abnormally high blood lipid levels remain alarmingly common among heart disease patients in Europe, according to a study published in the influential journal, Lancet.*

British researchers extracted data from three international EUROASPIRE surveys; consecutive studies of cardiovascular disease risk factors and prevention measures among heart disease patients in nine European countries. Among more than 2,300 subjects, the frequency of obesity increased from 25% to 38% since the first EUROASPIRE study, conducted in the mid-1990s. The incidence of elevated blood pressure remained about the same throughout the surveys, but the incidence of elevated blood cholesterol levels was slashed by more than half between EUROASPIRE I and EUROASPIRE III. Nevertheless, high cholesterol remains a concern for about half of cardiovascular patients surveyed. Meanwhile, the frequency of type 2 diabetes increased from 17.4% to 28%.

The investigators noted a need for better control of risk factors. "To salvage the acutely diseased heart without addressing the underlying causes of the disease is futile; we need to invest in prevention."

—Dale Kiefer


B Vitamins Beneficial in Celiac Disease

Vitamin B supplementation reduces blood levels of homocysteine, an amino acid implicated in cardiovascular disease, among patients with celiac disease.* Celiac disease is a digestive disorder characterized by an abnormal immune response to gluten (a protein found in wheat) and poor absorption of nutrients. Malabsorption of B vitamins due to celiac disease often results in elevated homocysteine.

The study included 25 adults with celiac disease who took daily B-vitamin supplements, 26 adults with celiac disease not taking vitamins, and 50 healthy controls who were not taking vitamins. Blood samples were drawn to measure vitamin B6, folate, vitamin B12, and homocysteine. Patients with celiac disease who took vitamins had significantly higher B-vitamin levels and significantly lower homocysteine levels compared with the other two groups.

The authors concluded that "regular use of B-vitamin supplements is effective in reduction of homocysteine levels in patients with celiac disease and should be considered in disease management."

—Laura J. Ninger, ELS
