Vitamins C and E Boost Cognitive Function in Elderly Women

Long-term use of vitamin C and E supplements appears to improve cognitive function in older women, research suggests.

In an effort to determine the effect of supplement use on mental agility, researchers at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston conducted telephone interviews of nearly 15,000 female participants in the Nurses’ Health Study. At the time of the interviews, all of the women were between 70 and 79 years of age. The researchers tested cognitive function by asking the women to perform such tasks as recalling a list of 10 words and repeating a series of numbers backwards. They then compared the results to the women’s self-reported use of vitamin supplements.

“We found evidence of better overall performance on our cognitive tests among long-term users of vitamins E and C combined than among women who had never taken either vitamin, and performance improved significantly with increasing duration of use,” wrote the researchers in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

The two antioxidants appear to work best together, as vitamin C supplementation alone had no effect on cognitive function and vitamin E supplementation alone had minimal effect when compared to taking the two antioxidants together.

— Marc Ellman, MD

Reference


Fiber Slows Progression of Atherosclerosis

Consumption of dietary viscous fiber appears to decrease the progression of atherosclerosis, according to researchers at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.*

Atherosclerosis describes the deposition of fat-laden plaques on the inside walls of the body’s medium- and large-sized arteries, which is associated with the development of cardiovascular disease. To determine the effect of fiber consumption on the development of atherosclerosis, the researchers measured the thickness of the carotid arteries (major blood vessels in the neck) of more than 500 adults. They then repeated these measurements twice over the next three years, and compared their findings to the participants’ reported fiber consumption and blood cholesterol levels.

The researchers found that the participants with the highest fiber consumption had the most optimal cholesterol levels. They also found that the more viscous fiber that the participants consumed, the slower their progression of carotid artery wall thickening. Viscous fibers, which were previously termed “water-soluble fibers,” include pectin, gums, and mucilage. Many fruits and vegetables are rich in viscous fibers.

“Cardiovascular disease due to advanced atherosclerosis is the leading cause of death and disability in the United States,” noted the researchers in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. “The present study suggests that increased dietary fiber intake has significant cardiovascular benefit and that the regulation of serum lipids by dietary fiber may be partially involved in the process of slowing the progression of atherosclerosis.”

— Marc Ellman, MD

Reference
