Is Vitamin D Deficiency to Blame for Autism?

A new theory may explain the dramatic rise in autism cases seen in recent decades, while offering a simple “cure” for the alarming epidemic. Dr. John Canneil, a physician who has previously proposed a link between seasonally dwindling vitamin D levels and susceptibility to influenza, has published a novel hypothesis regarding vitamin D’s implications for the developmental brain disorder, autism. Published in Medical Hypotheses, he proposes that physician-encouraged sunlight avoidance has contributed to widespread vitamin D deficiency.

“Animal data has repeatedly shown that severe vitamin D deficiency during gestation [adversely affects] dozens of proteins involved in brain development,” writes Dr. Canneil. Vitamin D-deficient rats are born with “increased brain size and enlarged ventricles, abnormalities similar to those found in autistic children.” What’s more, he notes, “Children with vitamin D-deficient rickets have several autistic markers that apparently disappear with high-dose vitamin D treatment.” Autism is also more common at higher latitudes, where vitamin D production is known to be problematic, especially during winter.

Pomegranate Juice Shows Promise as Erectile Dysfunction Treatment

A recent well-controlled trial of pomegranate juice for the treatment of mild-to-moderate erectile dysfunction in men concluded, “subjects were more likely to have improved scores when pomegranate juice was consumed.” The randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blind, crossover trial, conducted at a Beverly Hills men’s clinic, enrolled 53 men with mild-to-moderate impotence. Subjects blindly consumed pomegranate juice, or placebo, for four weeks. After a two-week washout period, they switched treatments.

Efficacy was assessed using two standardized scoring systems for quantification of erectile function—the International Index of Erectile Function and the Global Assessment Questionnaires. Although results did not achieve overall statistical significance, the small pilot study was considered encouraging. Investigators hope that longer studies using larger cohorts may achieve statistically significant results. The present findings support the conclusions of an earlier trial using an animal model, in which pomegranate juice reversed erectile dysfunction symptoms. Improvements were attributed to pomegranate’s potent antioxidant activity.

Fish Oil Alters Lipid Metabolism, Reduces Weight Gain

Japanese researchers have discovered that dietary fish oils promote weight loss by increasing lipid metabolism in the intestine. Scientists have known for some time that the omega-3 fatty acids, eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), lower blood lipid levels and reduce the tendency for obesity.

In the present study, Japanese researchers divided special obesity-prone mice into two high-fat diet groups, with and without fish oil, for five months. They found that body weight gain was significantly reduced among the fish oil-fed group, compared with the other high-fat group. Then, in a separate experiment to measure lipid metabolism at the genetic level, researchers found that ingestion of fish oil for two weeks increased intestinal lipid metabolism-related genes to levels found in the liver, one of the main sites of lipid metabolism. They concluded that “upregulation of intestinal lipid metabolism is associated with the anti-obesity effect of fish oil.”


