Blood Pressure Medication May Fight Parkinson’s Disease

A drug commonly used to treat high blood pressure and stroke offers promise in preventing or slowing the progression of Parkinson’s disease, according to a recent report.*

According to the recent study, the calcium channel blocker isradipine helps rejuvenate dopamine-releasing neurons in the brain by restoring more youthful patterns of electrical activity. Since the death of these cells leads to Parkinson’s disease, isradipine may help prevent or slow the progressive movement and speech difficulties that characterize the disorder.

According to Dr. Walter Koroshetz of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, “... calcium channel blockers, drugs currently used to reduce blood pressure, might someday be used to slow the steady progression of Parkinson’s disease.”

—Elizabeth Wagner, ND

Calcium, Vitamin D Supplements Reduce Cancer Incidence

Supplementing with vitamin D and calcium reduces the risk of developing cancers of all types, according to a just-released report.*

This four-year, double-blind, randomized, placebo-controlled trial assessed the incidence of cancer in nearly 1,200 postmenopausal women taking vitamin D and calcium supplements.

Cancer incidence was 60% lower among women who took 1,100 IU vitamin D3 plus 1,400 to 1,500 mg calcium each day, compared with those who received placebo. Calcium alone produced a modest but not statistically significant reduction in risk. Investigators estimate that for every 25 nmol/L increase in serum vitamin D, subjects experienced a 35% reduction in the risk of cancer. Higher initial serum vitamin D levels were also predictive of decreased cancer risk.

—Dale Kiefer

Fish Oil Boosts Bone Health

Already touted for its heart and mood benefits, a fish oil-rich diet may also boost bone health, according to a recent study published in the Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry.* If these findings hold true in humans, fish oil could offer a key strategy to prevent age-related osteoporosis.

Scientists supplemented the diets of two groups of female mice either with omega-3 fatty acid-rich fish oil or omega-6 fatty acid-rich corn oil. After six months, fish oil-fed mice maintained higher bone mineral density in different bone regions, compared with the mice fed omega-6 fats. The omega-3 fed animals also demonstrated increased levels of a bone formation marker, and fewer bone-degrading osteoclast cells in bone marrow cell cultures.

—Cathy Burke

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