If you have a heart attack, it is more likely to occur in winter, at the beginning of the week, and in the early morning. A deposit of arterial plaque is likely to break off, travel to your right coronary artery, and block blood flow. If you are under the age of 65 and this is your first heart attack, you have an 85% chance of dying from it. There is a 50-50 chance that you had no previous symptoms of heart disease.

One indication that you are headed for a heart attack is high blood pressure. Many people ignore this condition when it is diagnosed, writing it off to high salt intake or stress. But high blood pressure has little to do with salt or stress. Heart attacks most often occur when blood flow is most constricted—about 6 a.m. This is also when levels of the sleep hormone melatonin drop precipitously and those of the stress hormone cortisol increase. Melatonin interacts with blood vessels through receptor sites on the coronary arteries.

Researchers recently discovered that if men take melatonin before bedtime, their blood pressure may decrease as much as if they were taking an antihypertensive drug. The participants in the study took 2.5 mg of melatonin for three weeks. Melatonin also increased their quality and quantity of sleep.

Other beneficial effects of melatonin that were not measured in the study include enhanced memory, increased growth hormone levels, and decreased cortisol levels.

— Terri Mitchell

References

Fish Oil Helps Relieve Lupus Symptoms

A recent study found that fish oil rich in omega-3 fatty acids is helpful in relieving the symptoms of lupus.

Lupus is a chronic inflammatory disorder that can manifest with symptoms such as fatigue, joint pain, fever, skin eruptions, neurological changes, and kidney problems.

Fish oil rich in the omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA is known for its anti-inflammatory activity and beneficial effects in treating rheumatoid arthritis and other inflammatory conditions. Copper is an essential trace element that plays a role in collagen synthesis. Both fish oil and copper have demonstrated therapeutic effects in rat studies of lupus.

In this double-blind, placebo-controlled trial, 52 individuals with lupus were assigned to four treatment groups. One group received 3 grams of fish oil and 3 mg of copper, one group received 3 grams of fish oil only, one group received 3 mg of copper only, and the final group received placebo only. Disease activity was measured using the Systemic Lupus Activity Measure (SLAM-R) and blood samples, with measurements taken at baseline, 6, 12, and 24 weeks.

At the end of the trial, a significant decline in SLAM-R scores was seen in patients taking the fish oil. No significant effect on SLAM-R scores was observed in the patients supplementing with copper. The study concluded that dietary supplementation with fish oil may be beneficial in managing the symptoms of lupus. Copper supplements, however, do not appear to offer symptomatic relief for individuals with lupus.

Reference