Garlic Extract Limits Atherosclerosis Progression

Aged garlic extract slows the progression of atherosclerosis in adults, report scientists in California.1,2

In a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled pilot study, 19 patients who took aspirin and cholesterol-lowering statin drugs were followed for a year. Half received a 4-mL dose of aged garlic extract daily, while half took inactive placebo. Electron beam tomography was used to monitor changes in calcification in the subjects' coronary arteries. Calcification underlies the transformation of arterial plaques to "hardened" atherosclerotic lesions, which interfere with vascular blood flow and may eventually lead to heart attack.

Compared to subjects who took placebo, those who consumed aged garlic extract had far less calcification of coronary artery plaques over the course of the study. "Garlic may prove useful for patients who are at high risk of future cardiovascular events," the researchers concluded.3

—Dale Kiefer


EGCG, COX-2 Inhibitor Fight Prostate Cancer

The combination of a COX-2 (cyclooxygenase-2) inhibitor drug and the green tea polyphenol EGCG (epigallocatechin gallate) works synergistically to thwart prostate cancer in cell cultures and live animals, according to a recent report.*

While scientists have known for years that anti-inflammatory COX-2 inhibitors (such as celecoxib, or Celebrex®) may help prevent cancer, concerns about the toxicity of these drugs, particularly Vioxx®, has spurred a search for complementary agents that can be combined with low doses of the drugs to help prevent cancer.

When three lines of human prostate cancer cells were treated with EGCG, a COX-2 inhibitor used in experimental studies called NS398, or a combination of the two in the laboratory, the combination resulted in greater inhibition of cancer cell growth and increased apoptosis (programmed cell death) than either agent alone. In mice implanted with human prostate cancer cells, combination treatment with EGCG and celecoxib inhibited tumor growth and reduced levels of PSA (prostate-specific antigen, a marker of prostate disease).

—Dale Kiefer


Vitamin A, Carotenoids Cut Risk of Stomach Cancer

High intake of dietary vitamin A and related compounds greatly reduces the risk of developing gastric (stomach) cancer, report scientists in Sweden.* Vitamin A helps control cell proliferation and tissue differentiation throughout the body.

This prospective study evaluated the dietary intake of more than 82,000 adults for approximately seven years. Those with the highest intake of vitamin A and retinol (from dietary and supplemental sources) were much less likely to develop gastric cancer than those with the lowest intake. Higher dietary intake of the vitamin A precursors alpha-carotene and beta-carotene also reduced the risk of developing gastric cancer. Subjects with the highest intake of vitamin A and carotenoids cut their risk of gastric cancer nearly in half compared to those with the lowest intake of the vitamin.

—Dale Kiefer

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