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with Julie Tomlinson

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MATERNAL COD LIVER OIL USE HELPS KIDS’ IQ SCORES

The Institute for Nutrition Research in Oslo, Norway completed a study that can be seen in its entirety in the January issue of Pediatrics that confirms fish oil nutrients can improve children’s cognitive function. The study recruited women who planned to breast-feed after birth and who would consume cod liver oil during pregnancy so as to give docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) to the infants indirectly.

DHA is a long-chain fatty acid found in fish oil, while EPA is related to circulatory and joint health. Doctors used the Kaufman Assessment Battery of intelligence tests to evaluate the children’s cognitive processing, problem-solving skills, and nonverbal mental abilities. The study component that most strongly related to the children’s intelligence at age four was maternal DHA consumption.


LYCOPENE FORETells FUTURE ATHEROSCLEROSIS

Heart Disease Risk Factors Relate To Lycopene

When low levels of Lycopene, an antioxidant carotenoid found in tomatoes, are found in the body, the risk of atherosclerosis (plaque buildup) in the carotid artery increases. Lycopene likely plays a role in the early stages of atherosclerosis, according to researchers who published a study in the January issue of the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. The study explains how increased thickness in the inner layers of the carotid artery in the neck is a risk factor for further circulatory problems. Using ultrasound technology to examine carotid artery thickness and blood levels of lycopene as indicators, the connection between low lycopene levels and atherosclerosis seemed stronger in smokers than in non-smokers.


GROWTH HORMONE AND CALCIUM FOR GOOD BONE MINERAL DENSITY IN MEN

Doctors now believe that constant or intermittent growth hormone injections, along with calcium supplementation, increase bone density in men with some types of osteoporosis. In a current research study, men with idiopathic osteoporosis, which means osteoporosis of unknown origin, retained good bone mass for one year following therapy. This means that the therapy had a lasting effect. Moreover, total body and lean body mass numbers changed for the better. Fat mass index numbers decreased in the study’s treatment group.

Doctors conclude that growth hormone injection therapy for men with idiopathic osteoporosis produces lasting improvements in bone mineral density.

Of course, growth hormone therapies have risks that a person’s primary care practitioner should evaluate prior to starting such a therapy. In addition, other varieties of growth hormone products, such as over-the-counter homeopathic and vitamin forms, may not be as effective as the substances in this research. This study validates the need for further research on this topic.


HERBAL COMBO WINS VICTORY OVER PROSTATE CANcer IN LAB

An in vitro study shows that an herbal COX-2 inhibitor shrinks prostate cancer cells. The new study from the Department of Urology at Columbia University suggests that Zyflamend®, an herbal COX-2 inhibiting formulation, strongly suppresses the production of human LNCaP prostate cancer cells and induces their self destruction.

The study, entitled “Zyflamend, an Herbal COX-2 Inhibitor with In Vitro Anti-Prostate Cancer Activity,” was presented at the December 13, 2002 meeting of the Society of Urologic Oncology at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, cosponsored by the National Cancer Institute.

COX-2 refers to the cyclooxygenase 2 isoform, an important part of the body’s inflammatory response to injury or distress. Inflammation, however, can move into overdrive like “friendly fire,” where the cells being defended become the victims of attack. Such chaos can propagate a wide range of disorders including heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis, Alzheimer’s disease or cancer. The search for safe anti-inflammatory COX-2 inhibitors is the focus of research in leading institutes worldwide.

In the Columbia University Zyflamend study, researchers studied the effect of dif-