Pancreatic Cancer Linked to High Sugar Intake

People who consume a large amount of sugar each day run a markedly higher risk of developing pancreatic cancer, notes a recent study.* Among the most lethal of cancers, pancreatic cancer kills about 30,000 Americans every year.

Of nearly 80,000 men and women whose diets were studied from 1997 to 2005, 131 developed pancreatic cancer. Those who drank carbonated or syrup-laden drinks even twice a day were 90% more likely to contract pancreatic cancer than those who never drank them. Those who added sugar to their foods or beverages at least five times daily had a 70% higher risk of contracting the disease compared to those who did not.

This study clearly establishes a link between pancreatic cancer and high sugar consumption, which scientists believe may contribute to pancreatic cancer by causing frequent after-meal high blood sugar, thus increasing insulin demand and decreasing insulin sensitivity.

—Robert Gaston


Optimizing Omega-3 Intake May Avert Kidney Cancer

Omega-3 fatty acids may help prevent kidney cancer in women, says a newly published study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association.* While omega-3 consumption is correlated with decreased risks of heart disease, depression, and breast cancer, its role in kidney cancer has previously been unknown.1-4

Scientists followed a group of 61,433 women, aged 40-76, over an average of 15 years. The women completed a food-frequency questionnaire at baseline and at the study’s end. Regular consumption of omega-3-rich fatty fish—such as salmon, sardines, mackerel, and herring—was associated with a significantly decreased risk of developing renal cell carcinoma, or kidney cancer. By contrast, consumption of lean fish (low in omega-3 fatty acids) did not protect the women against developing kidney cancer.1

These results indicate that added protection against kidney cancer is yet another important health benefit of regularly consuming omega-3 fatty acids.

—Edward R. Rosick, DO, MPH, DABHM


Retinal Cell Transplants Help Blind Mice See

In a breakthrough operation, American and British scientists recently restored the sight of blind mice using a retinal stem cell transplant.*

The animals suffered blindness due to the loss of photoreceptor (light-sensing) cells that line the back of the eye, or retina. The functional loss of these cells causes some of the more common forms of adult blindness, including macular degeneration.

Previous attempts to restore vision using transplanted stem cells failed because the cells—master cells with the potential to become any type of cell in the body—did not develop into photoreceptors. By using precursor cells already programmed to become photoreceptors, the scientists were able to successfully restore the animals’ vision.

The study authors say continuing research could lead to the first human retinal cell transplants within a decade—a potential boon for those suffering from age-related loss of vision.

—Robert Gaston

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