Vitamin E Tocopherols Reduce Alzheimer’s Risk

Mixed vitamin E tocopherols may offer greater protection against Alzheimer’s disease than vitamin E alone, according to a recent report in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.*

The vitamin E family consists of four tocopherols and four tocotrienols. Alpha tocopherol is the most common form of vitamin E found in dietary supplements, while gamma tocopherol is the most prevalent form in food. Researchers have previously noted that vitamin E from food sources, but not from supplements, is associated with a reduced risk of Alzheimer’s.

In a six-year study examining community residents aged 65 and older, the participants completed food frequency questionnaires and underwent cognitive tests and clinical evaluation for Alzheimer’s disease. Higher intakes of vitamin E and alpha tocopherol equivalents were found to decrease the incidence of Alzheimer’s. With each 5 mg-per-day increase in dietary tocopherols, subjects had a 26-44% lower risk of developing Alzheimer’s. Alpha tocopherol and gamma tocopherol were independently associated with Alzheimer’s risk. Increased intake of vitamin E also provided protection against cognitive decline.

The study results underscore the importance of daily supplementation with vitamin E and indicate that mixed vitamin E tocopherols may offer greater protection against common diseases of aging such as Alzheimer’s than alpha tocopherol alone.

—Elizabeth Wagner, ND

Reference

Folate, Vitamin B12 Show Added Heart Benefits

Italian researchers report that folate and vitamin B12 improve three cardiovascular risk factors in patients with pre-diabetes.*

Endothelial dysfunction, insulin resistance, and elevated homocysteine all increase risk for heart disease. Insulin resistance occurs with the cluster of disorders called metabolic syndrome, the precursor to diabetes. Researchers have long known that folate and vitamin B12 reduce cardiovascular disease risk by lowering homocysteine levels. The Italian study showed that in patients with metabolic syndrome, folate and B12 help reduce two other cardiovascular risk factors: endothelial dysfunction and insulin resistance.

In this double-blind study, 50 patients with metabolic syndrome were randomly assigned to either a placebo group or supplement group. Both groups took a placebo for one month. The placebo group then received the placebo for an additional month, while the supplement group received 5000 mcg of folate and 500 mcg of vitamin B12 daily. After just one month of folate and B12 supplementation, homocysteine levels decreased by nearly 30% in the supplemented group. Insulin levels decreased significantly in the supplement group as well, indicating an improvement in insulin resistance. Endothelial function also improved markedly in the supplemented group.

The finding that folate and vitamin B12 reduce three risk factors of cardiovascular disease in those with metabolic syndrome is of enormous importance, as these individuals are at much greater risk for both diabetes and cardiovascular disease. It also suggests that folate and vitamin B12 may help prevent diabetes by improving insulin resistance.

—Linda M. Smith, RN

Reference
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