UVB-induced lipid peroxidation. Skin cells were exposed to UVB light for 20 min. Lycopene, beta-carotene and lutein were capable of decreasing UV-induced formation of free radical stress indicators (at one hour) to levels 40% to 50% lower than controls, which were free of carotenoids. The amount of carotenoids needed for optimal protection were 0.05, 0.40 and 0.30 nmol/mg protein for lycopene, beta-carotene and lutein, respectively. However, beyond the optimum levels, further increases of carotenoid levels in cells led to pro-oxidant (causing free radicals) effects.

PHOTOCHEMISTRY AND PHOTOBIOLOGY, 2002, Vol 75, Iss 5, pp 503-506

Oral contraceptives and the risk of ischemic stroke

Studies have shown an increased risk of blood clots in women taking third-generation oral contraceptives, (e.g., those containing the progestogens desogestrel or gestodene). A study looked at several types of oral contraceptives in 203 women with an ischemic stroke and 925 control women (age 18 to 49). Women with a first ischemic stroke were compared with control women without vascular diseases. All patients and control subjects filled in a questionnaire about the use of oral contraceptives and risk factors for ischemic stroke. The risk of stroke in women using any type of oral contraceptives vs. none was 2.3. Current users of first-generation oral contraceptives had an odds ratio of 1.7. Low-dose second-generation oral contraceptives increased the risk of stroke 2.4 times, and third-generation oral contraceptives increased the risk of stroke 2.0 times. The risk of stroke in women using third-generation oral contraceptives was not significantly different from that in women using second-generation oral contraceptives (odds ratio 1.0). Thus, third-generation oral contraceptives (containing desogestrel or gestodene) confer the same risk of first ischemic stroke as second-generation oral contraceptives (containing levonorgestrel).

STROKE, 2002, Vol 33, Iss 5, pp 1202-1208

Wheat grass and colitis

Wheat grass juice has been used for more than 30 years for gastrointestinal problems but was never clinically assessed in a controlled trial. In a one-month study, 23 individuals with ulcerative colitis (inflammation of the colon) received either 100 cc of wheat grass juice or a placebo. The results showed that the group given the wheat grass juice was associated with significant reductions in the overall disease activity and in the severity of rectal bleeding. There were no serious side effects. Wheat grass juice was demonstrated to be effective and safe for treating ulcerative colitis by itself or as an auxiliary treatment.

SCANDINAVIAN JOURNAL OF GASTROENTEROLOGY, 2002, Vol 37, Iss 4, pp 444-449

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