

Higher Vitamin D Levels Lower MS Risk

Higher serum levels of vitamin D are associated with a lower risk of multiple sclerosis among white—but not black or Hispanic—men and women, according to a recent report.* This new finding corroborates previous studies suggesting that vitamin D may have a protective effect against multiple sclerosis.

Harvard scientists used military disability databases to identify 257 people diagnosed with multiple sclerosis between 1992 and 2004. Each subject was then compared to two control subjects selected from the Department of Defense Serum Repository and matched for age, gender, and ethnicity.

For every 50-nanomole-per-liter increase in serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D among white subjects, there was a 41% decrease in the risk of multiple sclerosis. Whites in the top fifth of serum vitamin D concentrations had the lowest disease risk—62% lower than for those in the lowest fifth. Among black and Hispanic subjects, scientists found no association between serum vitamin D level and multiple sclerosis risk.

—Dayna Dye

* Munger KL, Levin LI, Hollis BW, Howard NS, Ascherio A. Serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D levels and risk of multiple sclerosis. *JAMA*. 2006 Dec 20;296(23):2832-8.



Broccoli-Tomato Combo Reduces Prostate Tumors

A diet enhanced with tomato and broccoli powders helps shrink tumors in an animal model of prostate cancer, and is more effective than a diet supplemented with either vegetable extract alone, according to a recent report.*

In a study of rats with implanted prostate cancer tumors, the animals were divided to receive diets containing 10% broccoli powder, 10% tomato powder, or a combination of both. Other rats received lycopene or finasteride (a drug used to treat prostate enlargement), or were surgically castrated. After 22 weeks of treatment, rats that received broccoli and tomato powder experienced greater shrinkage of their tumors than animals in any other group.

“Older men with slow-growing prostate cancer who have chosen watchful waiting over chemotherapy and radiation should seriously consider altering their diets to include more tomatoes and broccoli,” the study authors noted.

—Dayna Dye

* Canene-Adams K, Lindshield BL, Wang S, Jeffery EH, Clinton SK, Erdman JW Jr. Combinations of tomato and broccoli enhance antitumor activity in dunning r3327-h prostate adenocarcinomas. *Cancer Res*. 2007 Jan 15;67(2):836-43.

Folic Acid Improves Cognitive Function

Supplementing older adults with folic acid improves their cognitive function, according to recent findings published in the *Lancet*.*

Eight hundred eighteen subjects took either 800 mcg of folic acid or a placebo each day for three years. Participants were limited to those whose homocysteine levels were at least 13 and no greater than 26 micromoles per liter, and were tested for memory, sensorimotor speed, information processing speed, and word fluency at the study's onset and conclusion.

In those who received folic acid, serum folate increased more than fivefold and plasma total homocysteine decreased 26% compared to the placebo group. Memory, information processing speed, and sensorimotor speed were also significantly improved in the supplemented group. Supplemental folic acid may thus be crucial for preserving cognitive function in older adults.

—Dayna Dye

* Durga J, van Boxtel MP, Schouten EG, et al. Effect of 3-year folic acid supplementation on cognitive function in older adults in the FACIT trial: a randomised, double blind, controlled trial. *Lancet*. 2007 Jan 20;369(9557):208-16.



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