

Research Digest

Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Gout.

Antioxidants Help Prevent Alzheimer's

THE LEADING CAUSE of dementia in older people, Alzheimer's is a devastating disease that affects entire families. Now Dutch researchers have released the results of a major study that concludes a high intake of vitamins C and E is associated with a lower risk of Alzheimer's. The protective effect was particularly high among current smokers. Overall, participants whose daily vitamin C intake was greater than 133 milligrams had a 34 per cent lower incidence of Alzheimer's disease than those with an intake below 95 mg per day. Participants whose vitamin E intake was higher than 15.5 mg per day had a 43 per cent lower incidence than those with an intake lower than 10.5 mg per day.

Journal of the American Medical Association,
June 26, 2002

Combating Gout With Diet

Gout is a very painful form of arthritis affecting one in 30 Canadians. It is characterized by a high blood level of uric acid. Gout attacks are caused by the deposit of monosodium urate crystals in joint spaces, particularly in the big toe.

Throughout history, gout has been referred to as "the disease of kings." In the fifth century BC, Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, linked it to overeating and alcohol consumption. He counselled dietary restrictions and abstaining from alcohol. This is still very good advice, says Adel Fam, MD, professor of medicine at the University of Toronto. Dr. Fam points out that a diet free of nitrogen-containing compounds called purines can lower urate levels significantly. Such a diet would exclude all meats, seafood, yeast, beer and alcohol, as well as peas, beans,

lentils, asparagus, spinach and mushrooms. It is particularly important to avoid all alcoholic drinks.

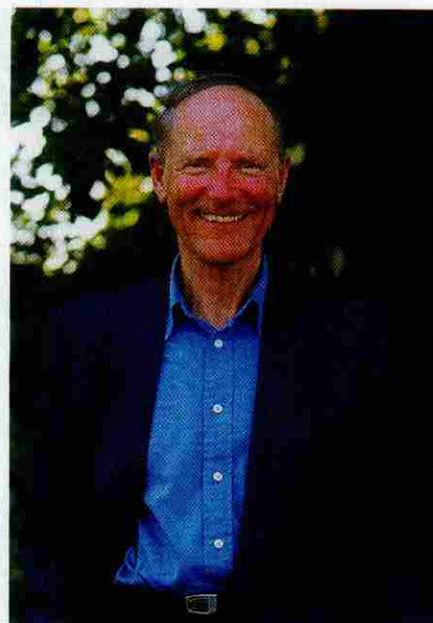
A diet containing 40 per cent carbohydrates, 30 per cent protein and 30 per cent unsaturated fats also appears to be very effective in reducing blood levels of uric acid and gout attacks. Recent research has shown that supplementing with gamma-linolenic acid (evening primrose oil) and eicosapentaenoic acid (fish oil) suppresses inflammation caused by urate crystals.

Journal of Rheumatology, July 2002

Low Testosterone Linked to Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease (PD) affects more than one million people in North America, many of whom also suffer from depression, anxiety, decreased energy levels, sexual dysfunction and an overall decline in quality of life. Researchers at Emory University now report that these conditions, at least among men, could be due to a testosterone deficiency. They describe five cases of elderly men with PD who were suffering from depression, fatigue, decreased libido and decreased work performance. All of them had lower-than-normal testosterone levels. They were given testosterone replacement therapy involving daily applications of testosterone gel. One month later they were re-evaluated and all showed marked improvement in emotional well-being, libido (sex drive), erectile function, mobility and work performance. The researchers also tested 68 other male PD patients for testosterone and found that 35 per cent of them had deficiencies.

Archives of Neurology, May 2002



Painkillers May Slow Healing of Broken Bones

Dr. Thomas Einhorn, an orthopedic surgeon at Boston University Medical Center, warns that taking certain painkillers when trying to heal a broken bone may slow or totally block the healing process. Certain NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) such as ibuprofen and indomethacin can delay healing by several weeks. Aspirin does not have this effect. Dr. Einhorn has found that two new NSAIDs, rofecoxib (Vioxx) and celecoxib (Celebrex), not only delay the healing process, but actually block it completely—at least in laboratory rats. The new drugs inhibit the cox-2 enzyme, which appears to be crucial in bone formation and regeneration. Dr. Jeremy Saklatvala of the Kennedy Institute of Rheumatology warns, "People with healing fractures should steer clear of these drugs." ■

New Scientist, June 8, 2002

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A chemical engineer by trade, Hans Larsen has been an avid health researcher for more than 10 years. His monthly newsletter on the latest in scientific research, *International Health News*, is available at yourhealthbase.com.

