

LE Magazine January 1999

Late-breaking, brief news items of interest to life extensionists, as well as anyone interested in living a longer, healthier life.

In The News

Vindication on An Important Issue

The government has finally recognized what the Life Extension Foundation has been saying for years: That many approved pain-killers or other medications can be harmful.

The Food and Drug Administration mandated in October that the makers of over-the-counter pain relievers and fever reducers will have to start carrying label warnings against mixing alcohol and pain relievers. The products include aspirin; acetaminophen, sold under the brand name Tylenol and other names; ibuprofen, the active ingredient in Advil and other brands; naproxen sodium, the active ingredient in Aleve; and ketoprofen, the active ingredient in Orudis KT and Actron.

The agency said that people who drink, then reach for the pain killer afterwards, may have an increased risk of liver damage or stomach bleeding from these drugs.

"FDA urges people with a history of alcohol use to seek a doctor's advice about their risk of side effects before taking these medications," said Acting FDA Commissioner Michael A. Friedman.



The new alcohol warning labels will appear on the products bought by millions of people in drug stores, supermarkets and elsewhere. The new warnings all begin: "Alcohol Warning: If you consume 3 or more alcoholic drinks every day, ask your doctor whether you should take (name of ingredient) or other pain relievers/fever reducers."

This is followed by an additional warning: "Acetaminophen may cause liver damage." Or, that aspirin, carbaspirin calcium, choline salicylate, ibuprofen, ketoprofen, magnesium salicylate, naproxen sodium or sodium salicylate "may cause stomach bleeding." Or, that combinations of acetaminophen and other ingredients "may cause liver damage and stomach bleeding."

The danger made headlines in 1994 when a Virginia man won an \$8 million lawsuit, claiming he needed a liver transplant after mixing Tylenol and his habit of wine with dinner.

While the new ruling addresses chronic alcohol users, the Foundation has cautioned that most OTC pain remedies can have serious side effects in general. One result of acetaminophen injury, for example, is the generation of toxic free radicals in the liver. It can cause permanent kidney damage if taken over an extended period of time, and has been shown to increase the risk of kidney cancer. As noted in the Foundation's reference work, Disease Prevention and Treatment Protocols, for those in chronic pain who cannot find relief from natural pain relief therapies, acetaminophen and other OTC pain relievers should be used sparingly.

E is for Essential

According to a U.S. Department of Agriculture study, the elderly may get an immune boost by taking vitamin E supplements on a daily basis. Men and women over the age of 65 who took 200 international units (IU) of vitamin E had the strongest responses, according to Simin Nikbin Meydani, the usda's Agricultural Research Service nutritionist and immunologist who led the study.

The six-month study involved 80 men and women. They were separated into four test groups: those receiving 60 IU, 200 IU and 800 IU of vitamin E, and those taking a placebo. It was found that 200 IU was the optimal dosage which produced the most significant results. In this case, more was not necessarily better.

The study also tested whether supplemental vitamin E caused volunteers to produce antibodies against their own proteins, which can lead to autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis. The study concluded it did not. Further, Meydani said no side effects were evident from taking the supplements.

Supplements are one way to add vitamin E to your diet. Other foods rich in the vitamin include nuts, seeds, whole grains, fortified

cereals, vegetable oils, margarine, seafood, liver and green leafy vegetables.

Deprenyl and Life Span

Last August, the Parkinson's Charitable Trust began running ads in Toronto newspapers looking for 1,500 volunteers to participate in a long-term study to determine whether the drug deprenyl can make you live longer and better. Dr. Morton Schulman was instrumental in setting up the Trust after he contracted Parkinson's disease 15 years ago. Half of the 1,500 volunteers in the double-blind deprenyl study began taking 5 mg of the drug twice he Food and Drug a week in September, while the other half began taking a like amount of a placebo. Dr. Schulman, who says deprenyl is harmless and doesn't interact with any other drug, sought healthy individuals aged 40 to 65 for the 15-year study. Initial results will be revealed in five years.

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