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IN THE NEWS

CLA combined with cellulite therapy
shows dramatic improvement

Impressive" results were published of a pilot study investigating the effects of an herbal therapy and conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) as an integrated approach to fight cellulite [Adv Ther 2001 Sep-Oct;18(5):225-9].

Cellulite is the body's way of storing fat in women to ensure enough calories for pregnancy and lactation. Fibrous membranes that lay between deposits of soft tissue work to gather fat into discrete pockets. These bands of connective tissue run from the dermis to deeper layers of connective tissue that separate muscles from organs, and allow the skin to dimple and become irregular [American Academy of Dermatology].

For the study, 60 women were assigned to three groups; one, taking an herbal anti-cellulite pill alone, and two other groups taking the herbal pill plus 400 mg and 800 mg of CLA, respectively.

At the trial's conclusion, there were "visible but minimal" improvements in cellulite appearance in only two women who took the monotherapy and an average loss of 0.33 inch of thigh circumference. Eleven women in that group showed no improvement, the investigators wrote.

In the group taking the combination therapy with the lower dosage of CLA, eight women showed improvement in cellulite appearance, but ten showed none. Thigh circumference decreased an average of 0.58 inch.

However, of the women taking the combination treatment with the highest dosage of CLA, eleven showed improvement in cellulite, two displaying "marked improvement." The average loss in thigh circumference was nearly one inch.

"...The results obtained with the CLA supplement were more impressive and occurred in a higher percentage of participants," the study authors concluded.

-John Martin

Garlic may reduce risk of prostate cancer

In ancient times, people draped garlic around their necks to ward off "evil spirits." In the near future, people may consume garlic and other vegetables from the allium food group to ward off prostate cancer.

A recent study conducted by National Cancer Institute (NCI) researchers found that a diet rich in vegetables from the allium food group-garlic, shallots and onions-cuts the risk of prostate cancer in half. The study indicated that eating just a tenth of an ounce of scallions daily lowers prostate cancer risk by about 70%; that same amount of garlic reduces the risk by about 53%. The study authors suggest that one clove of garlic daily can achieve desired preventive effects. Results were based on interviews with male residents of Shanghai, China: 238 with prostate cancer and 471 cancer-free. The typical Chinese diet relies heavily on garlic, scallions and onions and, perhaps not incidentally, men in China have the lowest rate of prostate cancer in the world.

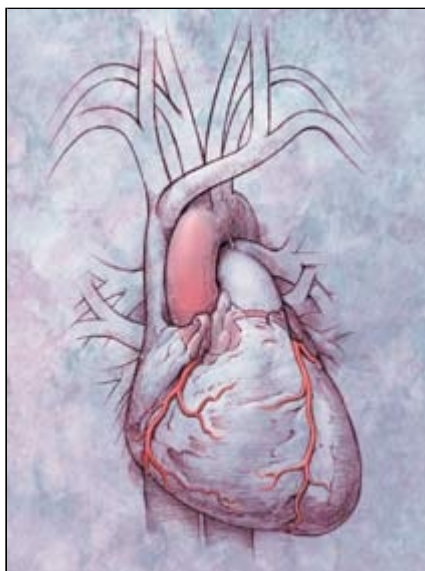


This is not the first study to associate garlic with preventative effects against cancer. In 1993, epidemiologic case-control studies reported that garlic inhibited tumor growth in gastric cancer [Br J Cancer 1993 Mar;67(3):424-9]. Another study found that pure allicin, the primary ingredient of crushed garlic, inhibited proliferation of the following cancer cells: human mammary, endometrial and colon [Nutr Cancer 2000;38(2):245-54].

Ann W. Hsing, primary investigator in the NCI study on allium vegetables and prostate cancer, voices cautious optimism about these latest research results, saying the conclusions need to be replicated in another study. In the interim, it may be beneficial to eat a diet rich in vegetables from the allium food group.

-Elizabeth Heubeck

Taurine reverses damage done by smoking and protects against heart disease



Smokers may want to increase their intake of fish to reduce their risk of heart disease and stroke. This advice comes as a result of a study finding taurine, an amino acid present in fish, able to restore normal blood vessel function in smokers.

Proper vessel function is key to preventing hardening of the arteries. Cigarette smoke produces changes in blood vessels, causing them "to behave like a rigid pipe rather than a flexible tube," explains Dr. David J. Bouchier-Hayes, principal investigator of the study. Such rigidity prevents the vessels from dilating in response to increased blood flow, resulting in a condition called endothelial dysfunction, an early sign of atherosclerosis and a primary cause of heart attacks and stroke.

The study investigators recruited 15 healthy smokers and 15 healthy non-smokers. Initially, the smokers' blood vessel diameter was smaller than non-smokers'. After taking 1.5 grams per day of taurine for five days, the smokers' blood vessel diameter increased, equaling that of non-smokers. Study results were published in the January 7, 2003 issue of *Circulation*.

This is not the first study to associate taurine with a decreased risk of heart disease. Researchers at the University of South Alabama found that congestive heart failure responds favorably to taurine therapy [Amino Acids 2000; 18(4):305-18]. A large-scale

study in Japan drawing from 24 populations in 16 countries revealed a strong, inverse association between levels of taurine excretion and ischemic heart disease [Hypertens Res 2001 Jul;24(4):453-7]. An Australian study discovered taurine to be one of the key properties in fish that protect against cardiovascular disease [Asia Pac J Clin Nutr 2001;10(2):134-7].

Individuals seeking to boost their taurine intake can choose from all types of fish, including fatty fish, mild fish, white fish and/or taurine supplements. Other supplements that help to protect against endothelial dysfunction are vitamin C and folic acid.

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