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THE BETTER HEALTH NEWS

CoQ_{10} AND PARKINSON'S DISEASE

TO YOUR HEALTH

Parkinson's disease is a progressive, chronic neurologic disease that affects half a million Americans. A study that appeared in the *Archives of Neurology* (October 2002, Vol. 59, No. 10, pp. 1541-1550) looked at the effect supplementation with CoQ_{10} (coenzyme Q_{10}) had on patients with Parkinson's disease. CoQ_{10} is necessary for energy production in the cell, and it works as an antioxidant to protect cells from chemical damage.

Earlier studies have demonstrated that CoQ_{10} levels are reduced in the cells of patients with Parkinson's disease and that cellular energy production in these patients is impaired. Studies on animals have shown that CoQ_{10} supplementation can protect the area of the brain that is affected by Parkinson's disease.

The study noted above looked at 80 patients with early-stage Parkinson's disease. All of the subjects had classic symptoms, tremor, stiffness and slowed movement. The subjects were divided into four groups. One group received a placebo (containing only vitamin E), with the other three groups getting vitamin E and either 300 mg/day, 600 mg/day or 1,200 mg/day of CoQ10. The subjects were evaluated one month after the initiation of treatment and every four months thereafter (for a total of 16 months).

Side effects from the CoQ_{10} were mild, and all subjects were able to stay on the original dose. Also, the percentage of subjects reporting side effects were the same for both the treatment and the placebo groups. The groups receiving 300 mg/day and 600 mg/day of the CoQ_{10} developed less disability than the placebo group. In subjects receiving 1,200 mg/day of CoQ_{10}, there was 44% less decline in motor function, mental decline, and the ability to perform tasks necessary for daily living.

This was a small study, and is far from conclusive, But the topic is worth further studies in the future.. The subjects receiving the CoQ_{10} also had increase in blood levels of CoQ_{10} and improved energy production in the cells.

ANXIETY, INFLAMMATION AND OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Studies have shown that low levels of omega-3 fatty acids may be linked to both depression and to inflammation. A recent double-blind study appearing in *Brain Behavior, and Immunity* (Volume 25, Issue 8, November 2011, Pages 1725–1734 doi:10.1016/j.bbi.2011.07.229) looked at omega-3 fatty acid consumption and its effect on the production of inflammatory chemicals, known as cytokines, and depression. The subjects of the 12 week study were 68 medical students who were given either a placebo or an omega-3 fatty acid supplement containing EPA (2085 mg/day) and DHA (348 mg/day). Blood samples were taken regularly during periods of low stress as well as on days before an exam. The student who received the omega-3 supplement produced lower levels of the chemicals associated with inflammation. Compared to controls, those students who received the supplement had a 14% decrease in production of lipopolysaccharide (LPS) stimulated interleukin 6 (IL-6) (a chemical that indicates the presence of inflammation) and a 20% reduction in anxiety symptoms, without significant change in depressive symptoms.

Because people vary in their ability to absorb essential fatty acids, blood tests were performed to look at the ratio between omega-3 fatty acids and omega-6 fatty acids in the blood. A higher ratio of omega-3 to omega-6 fatty acids was associated with decreased tumor necrosis factor alpha, another chemical that indicates the presence of inflammation.

The authors concluded, "The reduction in anxiety symptoms associated with omega-3 supplementation provides the first evidence that omega-3 may have potential anxiolytic benefits for individuals without an anxiety disorder diagnosis."

ARE WATER BOTTLES DANGEROUS?

Biphenol A, commonly known as BPA is a chemical that is used in the manufacture of soft plastics that are often used to make food containers and water bottles. Data obtained from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey was published in *JAMA* (2008 Sept 17:300(11):1303-10). Urine samples were taken from 1,455 adults were tested for BPA. Researchers found that high BPA concentrations were associated with an increased risk for coronary heart disease, heart attack, angina and diabetes. Elevated liver enzymes (indicating liver cell damage) were also found in subjects with elevated BPA levels.

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ENDOMETRIOSIS

A study appearing in *Ginecologia y obstetricia de Mexico* (2006; 74(1): 20-8) looked at the amount of oxidative stress and the antioxidant intake in 48 women with endometriosis. The researchers found an inverse relationship between the amount of antioxidants in the diet and the severity of the disease. Also, women with endometriosis tend to have inferior antioxidant status as compared to healthy controls. Earlier research has shown that there is a link between endometriosis and chemical exposure; so it makes sense that antioxidant intake can help women who suffer with endometriosis.

Researchers at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), George Washington University, and the Endometriosis Association conducted a cross sectional survey of 3,680 women with surgically diagnosed endometriosis. The study was published in the journal, *Human Reproduction* [2002;17(10):2715-2724]. Researchers found an increased incidence of many chronic and autoimmune diseases in women with endometriosis compared to the general population. Allergies occurred in over 60% of the endometriosis patients compared to the 18% in the general population. Hypothyroidism was seven times more common, chronic fatigue syndrome was more than 100 times more common, and fibromyalgia was nearly twice as common in endometriosis patients. Endometriosis patients also had an increased incidence of autoimmune diseases like lupus, rheumatoid arthritis and Sjogren's syndrome.

WE LIVE IN A CHEMICAL "SOUP"

Chemical exposure can cause a wide variety of symptoms, including fatigue, headaches, skin problems, digestive problems, recurrent Candidiasis, allergies and even cancer. Some occupations that involve chemical exposure are farmers, hair dressers, photographers, refinery and factory workers, airline employees, truck drivers, auto mechanics, painters, doctors and x-ray technicians. But in reality, all of us have an inappropriate amount of chemical exposure.

Just living on Earth gives us a fair amount of chemical exposure. How close do you live to a highway or airport? Air pollution is concentrated in the cities, but exists throughout the country. Farmers use liberal amounts of pesticides on their crops and liberal amounts of antibiotics in their animals. The amount of chemical exposure Americans get is unprecedented in history. Cancers of the liver, kidney and lymphatic system are on the rise. For people who are chronically ill, people who have multiple symptoms, who may be described as "just plain sick," chemical toxicity is often one of their primary issues.

In the midst of this chemical bath we all are taking are people who suffer from many symptoms; they are like canaries that coal miners used to take into the mines. If the canary died, the miners knew that there were dangerous gasses present in the mine. The "body burden" of chemicals is tested by the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention every two years. It has found that the average American now has 116 synthetic compounds in his or her body. These include dioxin (from burning plastic), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (from auto exhaust) and organochlorine pesticides. There are about 75,000 different chemicals produced in the United States each year, 3,000 of which are produced in quantities greater than 50,000 tons each year. Chemicals that were banned decades ago still persist in the soil, air and water. DDT, banned 34 years ago, still exists in detectable levels in many people. It would be interesting to see the CDC's result if all of these chemicals were tested for.

Recent studies have detected these pesticides, plastics and polymers not only in umbilical cord blood, but in the placenta, in human milk and in the bloodstreams and body fat of infants. These substances may have far reaching effects on our health. One toxin threatening mothers and children is mercury. Mercury has been linked to breast cancer, autism and attention deficit disorder. In 2002, a study found that nearly 15% of American women of reproductive age have enough of this contaminant in her blood to endanger a developing fetus.

God heals, and the doctor takes the fee.—

Benjamin Franklin

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DESIRE TO EXERCISE LINKED TO BRAIN CHEMICAL

The body's response to a chemical found in the brain, orexin A, may be linked with the desire to exercise and may explain a difference between active people who are always on the go and couch potatoes. Research published in the *American Journal of Physiology - Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology*, online August 14, 2006, studied the response of rats to orexin A. Rats who were lean and fidgeted a lot were very sensitive to orexin A, while sedentary rats were not.

People who engage in spontaneous activity, those who are inclined to be active during the day tend to be leaner than those who vegetate in front of the television. The researchers wanted to see if there was a chemical cause for the tendency to be active. They focused on orexin A because it is known to be involved with appetite as well as movement.

The researchers took rats who had a predisposition to be obese and rats who were lean and treated them with orexin A. Rats who are prone to be obese are not very sensitive to orexin A, and subsequently did not respond to injections of the chemical. Lean, active rats are very sensitive to the orexin A and became even more active when injected with the chemical. Now we only need to know how to sensitize to orexin A, perhaps future research will reveal this.