Vitamin E Helps with Recovery from Hip Fractures

By Greg Arnold, DC, CSCS, April 21, 2011, abstracted from “Serum Vitamin E Concentrations and Recovery of Physical Function During the Year After Hip Fracture” in the Journal Gerontology

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Of the many health concerns that face the elderly, one of the most severe is hip fracture due to falling. More than 90% of hip fractures among adults aged 65 and older are caused by falls, causing severe health problems that can lead to reduced quality of life and premature death. In 2004, there were more than 320,000 hospital admissions for hip fractures, with more than 500,000 hip fractures each year expected by the year 2040 (1).

In 2000, the total direct cost of all fall injuries for people 65 and older was more than $19 billion and is expected to increase to $54.9 billion by 2020 (2). Research has shown that 1,000 IU of vitamin D per day (3) and more than 13 grams of soy protein per day (4) can help regarding falling. Now a new study (5) has found that vitamin E may help facilitate recovery from a hip fracture.

In the study, 148 women between the ages of 75 and 91 who suffered a hip fracture had blood levels of alpha- and gamma-tocopherol measured at the time of fracture and at 2, 6, and 12 months afterwards. The researchers also measured four physical function measures: Six-Minute Walk Distance (6), Lower Extremity Gain Scale (7), Short Form-36 Physical Functioning Domain (8), and Yale Physical Activity Survey (9).

The researchers found vitamin E blood levels to be associated with physical improvements in two of four physical measures (Six-minute walk and Yale Physical Activity Scale). In the six-minute walk, those with the highest blood levels of alpha-tocopherol (65.9 micromoles/Liter) walked significantly further (55 vs. 15 meters) than those with the lowest alpha-tocopherol levels (35.3 micromol/L) (p = 0.007). For the Yale Physical Activity Survey, those with the highest alpha-tocopherol levels showed significantly more activity (1 hour vs.15 minutes spent in all physical activities during a typical week).

No association with seen with gamma-tocopherol in the six-minute test (p = 0.9) or the Yale Physical Activity Survey (p = 0.6) For the researchers, “Vitamin E may represent a potentially modifiable factor related to recovery of post-fracture physical function.”

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Reference:

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