Ginseng: A New Herb for Type 2 Diabetes?

By Greg Arnold, DC, CSCS, February 21, 2006, abstracted from “Ginseng Extract Inhibits Lipolysis in Rat Adipocytes In Vitro by Activating Phosphodiesterase 4” in the February 2006 issue of the Journal of Nutrition

Link – http://www.nowfoods.com/HealthLibrary/HealthArticles/WeeklyNewsletter/M077201.htm

For the 16 million Americans with Type 2 Diabetes (T2D), health complications are numerous and costly, making up much of the $132 billion spent each year to treat type 2 diabetes. From the threat of kidney failure to blindness to nerve damage and foot infections and skin problems, type 2 diabetes takes a heavy toll on your health.

Past research has found that a number of supplements help treat T2D, including Coenzyme Q10, 10-15g of fiber per day, and 500-1000mg of Acetyl-L-carnitine. Now a new study has added another supplement, ginseng, to this list.

The herb "ginseng" is actually several different types of plants, mainly Korean or Asian ginseng (Panax ginseng), Siberian ginseng (Eleutherococcus senticosus), and American ginseng (Panax quinquefolius). Panax ginseng has been an important herbal remedy in traditional Chinese medicine for thousands of years, where it has been used primarily as a treatment for weakness and fatigue.

Ginseng roots have been found recently to help protect against cancer, cardiovascular disease, and stress while also helping improve memory. These health-promoting effects are thought to be due to the high levels of antioxidants in ginseng called ginsenosides, of which there are 28 identified in American ginseng. One of the most recent studies on ginseng even found that 200 mg of the extract for four months reduced colds by 32%.

Building upon previous research showing 3 grams of Ginseng to decrease and help stabilize blood sugar levels, researchers isolated the fat cells of rats to see if Ginseng Extract (GE) could inhibit fat breakdown. Surprisingly, they found that GE inhibited fat breakdown by 49 percent from the start of the study, thereby improving blood sugar levels and increasing insulin sensitivity.

When trying to determine how ginseng was able to exert these effects, the researchers speculated that GE increased the activation of an enzyme called PDE4, an enzyme that has gained attention for its ability to possibly help treat a wide range of inflammatory diseases from asthma to lung disease.

Greg Arnold is a Chiropractic Physician practicing in Danville, CA. You can contact Dr. Arnold directly by emailing him at PitchingDoc@msn.com or visiting his website www.PitchingDoc.com

Reference:
2 “Type 2 Diabetes Complications” posted on the American Diabetes Association website www.diabetes.org/type-2-diabetes/complications.jsp

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“Fiber supplements may lower cardiovascular risk in type 2 diabetics” posted on the American Heart Association website April 30, 2005

www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3030591


