Vitamin B6 May Help Protect Against Parkinson's Disease

By Greg Arnold, DC, CSCS, August 3, 2006, abstracted from “Dietary folate, vitamin B\textsubscript{12}, and vitamin B\textsubscript{6} and the risk of Parkinson disease” in the July 25, 2006 issue of Neurology

Parkinson’s Disease (PD), characterized by tremors, slowness of movement, stiffness, and difficulty with balance, affects more than 1.5 million Americans, with 60,000 new cases each year.\textsuperscript{1} The combined direct and indirect costs of PD are estimated at more than $5.6 billion per year in the U.S. With medication costs for an individual patient averaging $2,500 a year, and therapeutic surgery costing up to $100,000 dollars per patient\textsuperscript{2} prevention of PD is at a premium.

The exact cause of PD still remains unclear, but oxidative stress\textsuperscript{3} and high homocysteine levels\textsuperscript{4} have been found to increase PD risk. Fortunately, nutrition has started to surface as a viable way to help protect against PD. Recent research has shown that an increase in both unsaturated fat and vitamin E intake\textsuperscript{5} helps protect against PD. Now a new study\textsuperscript{6} has found that vitamin B-6 may play a significant role in helping protect against PD.

Researchers evaluated the association between dietary intake of folic acid, vitamin B\textsubscript{12}, and vitamin B\textsubscript{6} and the risk of PD in nearly 5,300 patients who participated in the Rotterdam Study.\textsuperscript{7} In addition to having the patients complete food frequency questionnaires,\textsuperscript{8} researchers conducted neurologic exams over four different periods (1993–1994, 1997–1999, and 2002–2004) to test for any signs of PD.

After an average follow-up of almost 10 years, the researchers found that those with the highest intakes of vitamin B\textsubscript{6} (more than 1.73 mg per day) had a 31% decrease risk of PD while no association was observed for folic acid and vitamin B\textsubscript{12}.

For the researchers, “we found that higher intake of vitamin B\textsubscript{6}, but not vitamin B\textsubscript{12} or [folic acid], was associated with a significantly decreased risk of PD.”

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Reference:
1. About Parkinson Disease” posted on the National Parkinson Foundation Website www.parkinson.org/site/pp.asp?c=9dJFJLPwB&B&b=71125

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