

[IMAGE]

Folate Is First-Rate

Did you know that if you have a family history of colorectal cancer, you're twice as likely as the average person to suffer from the condition? You may be able to reduce your chances for colorectal cancer by moderating your alcohol intake and eating foods high in folate, according to a recent study in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention*.

The authors studied the diets of close to 90,000 30- to 55-year-old women, using a food-frequency questionnaire. Diets were examined for consumption of folate, multivitamins, alcohol, and methionine (an essential amino acid). The women were followed for 16 years to determine cases of colon cancer.

Women with a family history of colorectal cancer who consumed at least the U.S. recommended daily allowance (RDA) of folate each day, or took a multivitamin supplement daily for at least five years, were approximately 50% less likely to suffer from colon cancer than those who consumed less than half the RDA for folate. Those without a family history of colorectal cancer also showed a decrease in colon-cancer risk when taking the RDA of folate. Moderate-to-heavy alcohol intake increased risk for colon cancer in those with family history by nearly four times, though.

The RDA for folate is 400 micrograms, which is about the amount found in 3-4 servings of foods high in folate, such as leafy greens, citrus fruits, asparagus, beans, chicken, and whole grains. As this study suggests, necessary folate can also be obtained from vitamin supplements.

Reference:

Fuchs CS, Willett WC, Colditz GA, et al. The influence of folate and multivitamin use on the familial risk of colon cancer in women. *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention* 2002;11, pp. 227-234.

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