[IMAGE]

Higher Folate Levels May Protect You From Alzheimer's Disease

Also known as folic acid, folate is a type of B vitamin found in a variety of foods. It is often considered a "brain food" - and with good reason. Previous research has shown that folate can help reduce the risk of certain serious and common birth defects called neural tube defects, which affect the development of the brain and the spinal cord. Whether it can protect against conditions that affect the brain later in life, however, remains uncertain.

In this study, scientists examined the eating habits of 579 elderly people to determine what role folate may play in the development of Alzheimer's disease. Each person was asked to complete a seven-day "dietary diary" that tracked the intake of several vitamins and minerals, including folate. Patients submitted similar diaries approximately every two years, and were tracked an average of 9.3 years.

After adjusting for age, caloric intake and other factors, the researchers found that people who consumed the recommended dietary allowance (RDA) or greater of folate were 59 percent less likely to be diagnosed with Alzheimer's than those who consumed less than the recommended dietary allowance. They suggested that folate may reduce the risk of Alzheimer's by lowering levels of homocysteine, an amino acid that is found in the blood and can cause severe damage to nerve cells.

How can you increase your intake of folate? Simple - eat large amounts of fortified cereals and breads, beans, green vegetables (such as spinach and asparagus), and other foods that are naturally high in folate. In addition, talk to your doctor of chiropractic about foods and supplements that have high folate levels. Your brain will thank you later!

Corrada MM, Kawas CH, Hallfrisch J, et al. Reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease with high folate intake: The Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging. Alzheimer's & Dementia, July 2005;1(1):11-18.

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