

[IMAGE]

Antibiotic Use and ALS: Food for Thought

By Editorial Staff

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) is a progressive neurodegenerative disease with an eventual death sentence. As motor neurons die, the brain is unable to initiate and control muscle movement, compromising activities we take for granted, such as the ability to speak, eat, move ... and breathe.

While people have been known to live with the disease for various lengths of time (Physicist Stephen Hawking is a great example; he died at age 76), when they do pass away, ALS is the cause. Unfortunately, life expectancy following an ALS diagnosis is generally only about three years, on average.

What causes ALS? We don't quite know, although some cases are inherited via an identified genetic mutation. Could antibiotic use be a potential cause? Considering how frequently antibiotics are prescribed, that's a disturbing thought. Let's look at new research.

antibiotics - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Published in the *European Journal of Neurology*, the study evaluated antibiotic use in nearly 3,000 ALS patients and five controls (non-ALS sufferers) per ALS case, with each control matched to the ALS patient with regard to sex, birth year and area of residence.

Antibiotic prescriptions for both sets of subjects were assessed, with antibiotic use in the year prior to ALS diagnosis excluded (to account for potential diagnostic delay). Subjects with *any* antibiotic use were more likely to have an ALS diagnosis compared to no antibiotic use, with progressively higher risks for multiple antibiotic prescriptions (two, three and four or more) compared to none.

The researchers suggest the potential connection between antibiotic use and ALS may relate to gastrointestinal microflora. Antibiotics are known to compromise GI health, and some research suggests poor gut health may be linked to ALS, although more research is needed. Regardless, it's another reason to ask your medical doctor, "Is there another option besides antibiotics?" the next time he/she pulls out a prescription pad.

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