

[IMAGE]

## Fight Acid With Acid

Recently, a new and highly accurate predictor of declining health has emerged. The amino acid *homocysteine*, measured through blood serum concentration, is an accurate predictor of risk for stroke and heart disease. Whether homocysteine causes these conditions or is simply correlated has been uncertain, though.

Using 92 studies involving a total of over 20,000 adults, the authors of this study in the *British Medical Journal* evaluated the possible causation of stroke and heart disease due to high homocysteine levels in the blood. They found that for every unit increase in serum homocysteine, the odds were increased approximately one-and-a-half times for heart disease, deep vein thrombosis (major blood clotting) and stroke.

This adds to evidence suggesting the link between homocysteine and cardiovascular disease is a causal one. Lowering homocysteine concentrations in the blood by even less than one unit may significantly reduce the risk of heart disease, deep vein thrombosis and stroke.

So how can you lower your homocysteine levels? It's easier than you think. Homocysteine can be lowered through supplementation of another acid - folic acid. Also known as vitamin B9, folic acid can be obtained through foods including fortified cereals, peas and beans, spinach and whole wheat. To be sure you are getting enough, taking a multivitamin is your best bet. Folic acid also helps prevent birth defects (when taken by pregnant women), cancer, osteoporosis and depression.

### *Reference:*

Wald DS, Law M, Morris JK. Homocysteine and cardiovascular disease: Evidence on causality from a meta-analysis. *British Medical Journal* 2002;325, pp. 1202-1208.

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