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Preventive Measures for Ischemia Heart Disease (IHD)

A new study in the August issue of the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition has found that those at risk for ischemia heart disease (IHD) can benefit greatly from an increased intake of fish and/or dietary supplementation of omega-3 fatty acids. This study adds to previous research on the benefits of omega-3 fatty acids.

"Ichemia" basically means that there is insufficient blood and oxygen getting to the heart which has a negative effect on what's called systemic arterial compliance (SAC), a measure of the degree of artery elasticity. Increased stiffness in the large arteries can lead to hypertension and elevate pulse pressure - both of which increase the risk of coronary heart attack.

Symptoms can run the gamut from chest pains or tightness and pressure under the sternum to heart beat palpitations, irregular or rapid pulse, and shortness of breath.

The authors of the study note that "because of increasing evidence linking heightened pulse pressure, a reflection of increased arterial stiffness, to increased coronary risk, interventions that improve arterial compliance are thought likely to reduce risk for IHD."

Benefits of dietary supplementation

Omega-3 fatty-acid supplementation - These are the "good" fatty acids. There are two forms: Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and deocosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and they come from such fish as mackerel, herring, and anchovies.

Scientists in the 1970s studied Alaskan and Greenland Inuits and found that their diets consisted of high levels of omega-3 fatty acids which correlated with low rates of heart attacks. The Japanese who eat fish in greater quantities than other nations also experienced lower heart disease rates.

The American Diabetes Association and the American Heart Association advocate eating fatty fish as a safe and effective way to obtain the heart health benefits of omega-3s. Eating fatty fish regularly is an important strategy to improve health in not just heart problems in alleviating other health issues such as Type 2 Diabetes. Of course, diet and dietary supplementation should not preclude regular exercise, weight control efforts where needed, and overall healthful eating habits.