

Reuters Press Release

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Antioxidant combo may prevent some migraines

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NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Daily doses of antioxidants may reduce the frequency and severity of migraine headaches for patients who don't respond to drug treatment, a small new study suggests.

Eleven men and women with a long history of migraine did not respond to several type of drugs, including beta-blockers, antidepressants and anticonvulsants, had fewer and less severe headaches, on average, after taking capsules containing an extract of pine bark, vitamin C and vitamin E every day for three months, according to a report in the journal *Headache*.

There is evidence that damaging molecules known as free radicals, which are produced by normal metabolism, may contribute to the development of migraine, Dr. Sirichai Chayasirisobhon of Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Anaheim, California notes. Antioxidants neutralize free radicals and could thus help prevent migraine from occurring.

To investigate, he treated 12 patients to 10 capsules containing 120 mg pine bark extract, 60 mg vitamin C and 30 IU vitamin E every day for three months. Study participants completed a test designed to assess the amount of disability caused by migraine, known as MIDAS, before and after the three-month treatment period. Eleven patients completed the trial.

After three months, the patients had an average 50.6-percent improvement in MIDAS scores. In the three months before the treatment, they reported an average of 44.4 days of headache, compared to 26.0 days during the three-month treatment. Before treatment, participants rated their headache severity, on average, as 7.5 out of 10; this fell to 5.5 out of 10 after treatment.

Two patients showed no reduction in disability, headache severity or headache days after treatment. When the analysis was limited to the nine responders, MIDAS scores showed a 67.9 percent reduction.

The findings suggest "that this antioxidant supplementation may mitigate some as yet unknown mechanisms involved in a migraine attack," Chayasirisobhon writes.

He concludes: "The substantial effect shown by the antioxidant formulation in the present study in lessening the impact of migraine on patients' daily activities warrants further investigation."

SOURCE: *Headache*, May 2006.