

## Health News from 3Care Therapeutics

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### **Omega-3 May Reduce Breast Cancer Risk**

Postmenopausal women who take fish oil supplements for at least 10 years may be at less risk of developing breast cancer, according to the results of a recent report in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*, a journal of the American Association for Cancer Research.

Regular consumption of fish oil supplements, which contain high levels of the omega-3 fatty acids, EPA and DHA, was linked with a 32 percent reduced risk of breast cancer concluded the observational study conducted at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle, Washington.

The reduction in risk seemed to be limited to invasive ductal breast cancer, the most common type of the disease.

Lead researcher Emily White, works with the center's public health sciences division, said: *"It may be that the amount of omega-3 fatty acids in fish oil supplements are higher than most people would typically get from their diet."* But she highlighted the need for more research: *"Without confirming studies specifically addressing this we should not draw any conclusions about a causal relationship."*

Researchers asked 35,016 postmenopausal women in Washington State, aged between 50 and 76, who did not have a history of breast cancer to complete a 24-page questionnaire about their use of non-vitamin, non-mineral specialty supplements.

After six years, 880 cases of breast cancer were identified using the Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results registry.

White's study is the first to link the use of fish oil supplements with a decreased risk of this type of cancer. Previous studies have proved inconsistent.

One theory is that fish oil reduces inflammation which contributes to the development of cancer.

Meanwhile, researchers at Harvard University are seeking patients for the randomized Vitamin D and Omega-3 Trial. The research programme, known as VITAL, will assess the impact of fish oil supplements and vitamin D on cancer, heart disease and stroke.

Breast cancer occurs in both men and women but male breast cancer is rare. The National Cancer Institute estimated that there will be 207,090 new cases of female breast cancer this year and 1,970 new cases in males.

It predicts that the disease will cause 39,840 female deaths and 390 male deaths.

Specialty Supplements and Breast Cancer Risk in the Vitamins And Lifestyle (VITAL) Cohort  
Authors: E White, T Brasky, J Lampe, J Potter, and R Patterson

### **Low Vitamin D Levels Linked to Parkinson's Disease (reprinted from the BBC)**

Having low vitamin D levels may increase a person's risk of developing Parkinson's disease later in life, say Finnish researchers. **Their study of 3,000 people, published in Archives of Neurology, found people with the lowest levels of the sunshine vitamin had a three-fold higher risk.**

Vitamin D could be helping to protect the nerve cells gradually lost by people with the disease, experts say. The charity Parkinson's UK said further research was required.

Parkinson's disease affects several parts of the brain, leading to symptoms like tremor and slow movements.

### **30-YEAR STUDY**

The researchers from Finland's National Institute for Health and Welfare measured vitamin D levels from the study group between 1978 and 1980, using blood samples.

They then followed these people over 30 years to see whether they developed Parkinson's disease.

They found that people with the lowest levels of vitamin D were three times more likely to develop Parkinson's, compared with the group with the highest levels of vitamin D.

Most vitamin D is made by the body when the skin is exposed to sunlight, although some comes from foods like oily fish, milk or cereals.

As people age, however, their skin becomes less able to produce vitamin D.

Doctors have known for many years that vitamin D helps calcium uptake and bone formation.

But research is now showing that it also plays a role in regulating the immune system, as well as in the development of the nervous system.

### **VITAMIN TARGET**

Writing in an editorial in the US journal *Archives of Neurology*, Marian Evatt, assistant professor of neurology at Emory University School of Medicine, says that health authorities should consider raising the target vitamin D level.

"At this point, 30 nanograms per millilitre of blood or more appears optimal for bone health in humans.

"However, researchers don't yet know what level is optimal for brain health or at what point vitamin D becomes toxic for humans, and this is a topic that deserves close examination."

Dr Kieran Breen, director of research at Parkinson's UK, said: "The study provides further clues about the potential environmental factors that may influence or protect against the progression of Parkinson's.

"A balanced healthy diet should provide the recommended levels of vitamin D.

"Further research is required to find out whether taking a dietary supplement, or increased exposure to sunlight, may have an effect on Parkinson's, and at what stage these would be most beneficial."