Lycopene: Another Way to Help Protect Against Prostate Cancer

By Greg Arnold, DC, CSCS, May 10, 2006, abstracted from Lycopene as a chemopreventive agent in the treatment of high-grade prostate intraepithelial neoplasia” in the November-December 2005 issue of Urologic Oncology

First coined in the 1970’s, the term “chemoprevention” is defined as “intervention with a natural or synthetic compound to reverse or [stop cancer growth] in its early stages to prevent the development of invasive cancer”.

The 21st century, however, has seen a surge in chemoprevention because of the fact that cancer develops over the course of decades, goes through many stages, and offers many opportunities for prevention. The last 10 years has seen chemoprevention take center stage for prostate cancer because of its very slow, progressive nature and plentiful opportunities for prevention before it becomes malignant.

While increasing your intake of foods such as spinach, broccoli, red wine and green tea can help protect against prostate cancer, excluding items such as processed foods and saturated fat from your diet can also help protect against prostate cancer.

Now a new study finds an additional way to help protect against prostate cancer in the form of lycopene.

Building on previous research showing that lycopene decreases the risk of prostate cancer and may possibly reduce the growth of prostate cancer, researchers gave 40 patients with pre-malignant prostate cancer either 4 mg of lycopene twice per day or placebo for one year. In addition to performing prostate exams at one year of follow-up, researchers also measured blood levels of prostate specific antigen (PSA), a protein marker of prostate cancer.

At the end of the one-year follow-up, researchers found that while PSA levels decreased by nearly 42% in the lycopene group (6.07 to 3.5 ng/ml), PSA increased by 23% in the placebo group (6.55 to 8.06 ng/ml). Similarly, blood lycopene levels increased by 89% in the PSA group (from 360 to 680 ng/ml) but decreased by 52% in the placebo group (from 378 to 180 ng/ml).

In addition to stating that “lycopene is a safe drug to be used for a longer period without any adverse reaction”, the researchers concluded that “lycopene is an effective chemopreventive agent in the treatment of [pre-malignant prostate cancer] with no toxicity and good patient tolerance.”

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Reference:


11 “The Prostate Specific Antigen Test” posted on the National Cancer Institute Website

www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Detection/PSA