

Vegan diet promotes atheroprotective antibodies in patients with rheumatoid arthritis

A gluten-free vegan diet may improve the health of patients with rheumatoid arthritis, according to new research from the Swedish medical universit Karolinska Institutet. The diet has a beneficial effect on several risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

Rheumatoid arthritis is associated with an increased risk of atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) and cardiovascular diseases. The underlying causes are unknown, but researchers suspect that the disturbed balance of blood fats seen in patients with rheumatoid arthritis may be part of the explanation.

A research team at Karolinska Institutet has shown in a new study that a gluten-free vegan diet has a beneficial effect on cardiovascular risk factors in people with rheumatoid arthritis. The effect was seen when a group of patients who kept to a gluten-free vegan diet for a year were compared with a control group which had followed ordinary dietary advice.

Vegan food had a positive effect on symptoms of the disease, which were more pronounced in the control group. Blood levels of oxidised LDL-cholesterol, a risk factor for atherosclerosis, were also lower in the group which kept to the vegan diet. The vegan group also had higher levels of anti-PC, a type of antibody that the researchers believe has a protective effect against atherosclerosis.

“Our findings suggest a new mechanism by which the level of natural protective antibodies can be increased. They also show that diet can have effects on the immune system with implications for the incidence of disease”, says Professor Johan Frostegård, who led the study.

The study was initiated by Professor Ingiöld Hafström and was carried out within the framework of CVDIMMUNE, an EU consortium of ten European partners led by Johan Frostegård. The consortium is studying the significance of anti-PC in the hope of developing a vaccine against atherosclerosis.

Source: Karolinska Institutet

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