

LACTOBACILLUS MAY RELIEVE SIDE EFFECTS OF HELICOBACTER PYLORI TREATMENT

Source: A. Armuzzi et al., "Effect of *Lactobacillus GG* Supplementation on Antibiotic-Associated Gastrointestinal Side Effects During *Helicobacter pylori* Eradication Therapy: A Pilot Study," *Digestion* 63, no. 1 (2001): 1-7.

Individuals suffering from ulcers or gastritis are often treated successfully with a combination of antibiotics. The one-week, antibiotic triple therapy serves to eradicate *H. pylori*, the bacterium causing the condition. However, the therapy also eliminates "friendly" bacteria necessary for normal function of the gastrointestinal tract, and as a result, the patient is likely to be plagued with side effects such as nausea, bloating, diarrhea, taste disturbance, and loss of appetite. *Lactobacillus GG*, related to the *Lactobacillus acidophilus* found in supplements and some cultured milk products, is now thought to reduce side effects in patients who undergo the antibiotic therapy.

In a study published in the journal *Digestion*, 120 people diagnosed as having *H. pylori* infection were given antibiotics to treat their condition. Part of the group also received *Lactobacillus GG* with their antibiotics for 14 days. These participants reported a 60% lower risk of bloating and a 70% lower risk of diarrhea or taste disturbances than the individuals who received only antibiotics. The same results were observed during the follow-up period.

Results of the study also indicate that the *Lactobacillus GG*-supplemented group exhibited better tolerance for the antibiotic treatment than the control group.

APPLES COULD LOWER RISK OF HEART DISEASE

Source: "UC Davis Study Finds Heart Benefits from Apples and Juice," (Sacramento, CA: University of California-Davis Health System, 2001 [cited 21 February 2001]); available from Internet: news.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/apple_study.html.

The findings of a study conducted recently at the University of California-Davis, School of Medicine suggest that apples may greatly affect risk of heart disease. This in vivo trial was the follow-up to an in vitro study demonstrating the presence of phytonutrients in apples that can act as antioxidants. The objective of the second trial was to determine whether these phytonutrient compounds can slow the process of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) oxidation and protect the heart from atherosclerosis.

The clinical study consisted of 25 healthy adult men and women adding either 12 oz of apple juice or two apples into their diet without changing anything else. After six weeks, the two halves of the group reversed practices for another six weeks. Participants monitored their food intake every two weeks and were weighed continually throughout the 12-week study. No significant differences in dietary fat, cholesterol, total carbohydrate, sugar, or calorie intake were observed. It was revealed during the study that drinking apple juice resulted in a 20% increase in the time it took for LDL to oxidize. Research indicates that the longer LDL takes to oxidize, the lower the risk of heart disease. Eating apples resulted in reduced oxidation markers and a 22% increase in dietary fiber. Study results were published in the winter 2001 issue of the *Journal of Medicinal Food*.

MISTLETOE SHOWN INEFFECTIVE IN TREATING CANCER

Source: M.K. Steuer-Vogt et al., "The Effect of an Adjuvant Mistletoe Treatment Programme in Resected Head and Neck Cancer Patients: A Randomised Controlled Clinical Trial," *European Journal of Cancer* 37, no. 1 (January 2001): 23-31.

Mistletoe-based preparations have been thought by many to be useful in treating cancer, by stimulating the release of immune cells that kill cancer cells. A study conducted by a team of researchers in Germany has now shown that such treatment has no significant effect in boosting the immune system of cancer patients.

Each of 477 patients in the prospective, randomized, controlled clinical trial suffered from head and neck squamous cell carcinoma. All study participants received standard cancer-treatment therapy consisting of surgery or surgery followed by radiotherapy. In addition, for 60 weeks half of the group received mistletoe extract; the other half received a placebo. After five years it was determined that those participants who received the mistletoe extract were no less likely to suffer local/locoregional recurrences, distant metastases, or second primaries. Blood tests showed no differences in immune-cell response, and both groups in the study had similar rates of long-term survival. Researchers have also found mistletoe therapy to produce side effects, which include redness and itching.

POSTMENOPAUSAL WOMEN RESPOND TO SOY ISOFLAVONES

Source: Kerry E. Wangen et al., "Soy Isoflavones Improve Plasma Lipids in Normocholesterolemic and Mildly Hypercholesterolemic Postmenopausal Women," *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 73, no. 2 (February 2001): 225-231.

The low rates of breast, colon, and prostate cancers in Asian countries have prompted much discussion of the potential benefits of soy. Soy isoflavones, prevalent in Asian diets, have already been demonstrated to improve the blood pressure of menopausal females, and research continues to determine how postmenopausal women can benefit from soy. Postmenopausal women were the subjects of a randomized, crossover trial to examine the effects of soy isoflavone on plasma concentrations of triacylglycerol; apolipoprotein A-I; apolipoprotein B; lipoprotein (a); and total, LDL, and high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol. The LDL peak particle diameter was also studied. All participants were normocholesterolemic or mildly hypercholesterolemic.

Researchers studied fasting plasma samples from 18 women who consumed isolated soy protein daily throughout three 93-day periods. In women practicing a high-isoflavone diet, the plasma LDL concentration was 6.5% lower than that of the control group. The ratio of LDL to HDL cholesterol was 8.5% lower than the control group in women with low-isoflavone diets, and 7.7% lower in women with high-isoflavone diets. While these results are not staggering, they do signify that soy isoflavones can improve the lipid profile of postmenopausal women, and may contribute to a lower risk of coronary heart disease in a long-term, soy-supplemented diet. ♦