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Drinking problems may increase risk for dementia, study shows

A new study reveals that excessive alcohol consumption and dementia may have a stronger connection than previously thought.

Dementia is a group of neurological conditions that is characterized with progressive impairment in brain function. Individuals with dementia manifest with memory loss, confusion and the ability to perform daily tasks.

French researchers conducted a nationwide cohort study[1] that investigated a database of more than one million adults diagnosed with dementia in French hospitals between 2008 and 2013.

Investigators found that approximately 5 percent of the dementia patients had an early-onset dementia, a type of dementia that is seen in under 65 years of age.

In this type of dementia, the study found that most were alcohol-related or had a diagnosis of alcohol use disorder, with about 65 percent of cases being males.

Chronic alcohol intake was noted to be strongly associated with the onset of dementia for both genders. Furthermore, researchers calculated the risk to be three times higher in those who excessively drink.

These results confirm previous studies that associate alcohol drinking with the development of dementia. It further adds though that longstanding alcohol consumption has a greater risk compared when drinking is low to moderate.

This reiterates the call to moderate consuming alcohol in adults. The research authors have also advised that medical practitioners do regular screening for heavy drinkers, so that intervention and management be provided to them.

Colon cancer recurrence & death may be lowered by eating nuts, study reveals

Nuts have been advocated to be included in our daily diet due to its high content of unsaturated fatty acids, fiber, minerals and vitamins.

In a recent study[2], Yale Cancer Center researchers found that patients with colon cancer who regularly consumes nuts are at a reduce risk of having cancer recurrence and mortality compared to those who don't.

Experts' followed-up more than 800 patients with colon cancer stage 3 enrolled in an adjuvant chemo-therapy trial. During the course of the research, the patients were provided with questionnaires to report on their daily food intake.

Findings showed that those who regularly consumed at least two, or more servings of nuts per week have a 42 percent and 57 percent improvements in disease-free survival and in overall survival, respectively. Likewise, these findings were maintained across all other risk factors for cancer recurrence and death.

These promising results suggest a protective effect of nuts in patients with colon cancer. Further enriching the benefits associated with eating nuts. However, this study does not show the cause and effect between eating nuts and dementia, it only shows an association.

Nevertheless, nuts are important components in a healthy diet. Consumption should always be part of our daily diet, along with regular physical exercises.

High physical activity in women less likely to develop dementia

Health practitioners often remind us about having a regular exercise because of the abundant benefits of being physically fit.

The latest benefit is in possibly reducing the likelihood of developing dementia in middle age women, according to a new study published in the medical journal *Neurology*.

In the study, the experts worked on 191 volunteer women with average age of 50 years.[3] Their cardiovascular fitness, defined as the ability of the heart to sustain physical activity for prolonged periods, was determined and examined by a bicycle exercise test. They also underwent neuropsychiatric assessments to determine dementia incidence in six subsequent periods from 1974-2010.

Results revealed that 23 percent of the women developed dementia. Of this, 32 percent were women with low physical fitness, and 25 percent were among women who had medium physical fitness. On the other hand, 5 percent were only

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noted to have dementia among the group of women who had high physical fitness.

Accordingly, high fitness when compared to medium fitness showed a decreased risk of dementia by 88 percent.

Additionally, researchers have also noted that the mean age for the onset of dementia was 11 years higher among those who have high fitness in comparison to those who have medium fitness.

These findings are extremely promising, providing evidence that high physical fitness is protective of dementia. However, it needs to be emphasized that the study does not show cause and effect between dementia and physical fitness but only an association. Thus, investigators have recommended further studies on physical fitness and its association with the onset of dementia.

Nevertheless, the study points to another benefit of having regular exercise, and this time on our cognitive function. Our sedentary lifestyle needs to be changed to a more active lifestyle to prevent the occurrence of dementia.

Tai Chi aids respiratory function in patients with COPD

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a lung condition where airflow is blocked resulting in breathing difficulties.

At present, treatment of COPD entails medical management with bronchodilators, and pulmonary rehabilitation. The latter usually requires access to trained staff and specialized facilities; hence, the need for finding options to this therapy.

In a recent study[4], investigators found that Tai Chi - an ancient Chinese martial art that involves coordinated movements without the need for special equipment – comprises stretching, breathing, and helps boost respiratory function in patients with COPD.

In the research, 120 patients with COPD who had never used a bronchodilator in rural China were investigated. They were all started with a daily treatment of indacaterol, a bronchodilator. After two weeks, they were randomly assigned to two interventions for twelve weeks – traditional pulmonary rehabilitation and Tai Chi. During their assigned interventions, the St George's Respiratory Questionnaire (SGRQ) were administered to them in four visits.

Results of the study revealed that both Tai Chi and traditional pulmonary rehabilitation groups

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have similar improvements in the SGRQ scores. In twelve weeks, a clinically significant difference were noted with the two interventions, which favored Tai Chi.

Moreover, similar trends were also observed in the performance of a six-minute walk test for both groups.

The experts concluded that Tai Chi is at par with pulmonary rehabilitation in improving respiratory functions in patients with COPD.

They have also highlighted the lower cost and more easy access of Tai Chi in contrast to pulmonary rehabilitation as a treatment option, especially for patients with financial constraint and access limitation to pulmonary rehabilitation.

Nonetheless, the study authors still recommend pulmonary rehabilitation, but Tai Chi can be an alternative option for those patients where local pulmonary rehabilitation centers are not readily available.

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