

## Exploring the Role of Vitamins in Achieving a Healthy Heart

There are many avenues you can take to keep your heart healthy. The first step you should take is to have a medical professional evaluate the current status of your heart. This evaluation should at the very minimum consist of testing your blood for cholesterol, listening to the sound of your heart, and asking some background questions. Based on the results of this preliminary information, the medical professional will determine if further testing is necessary. If the tests reveal that you are at risk for developing heart disease because of certain risk factors, such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol they will probably recommend a plan for you to follow to make sure you don't develop heart disease. Unless your doctor is a strong advocate of natural medicine, the plan will probably include a prescription for medication. Alternatives to medication exist for heart disease patients, but it will undoubtedly be up to you to bring up the discussion.

Despite a few disparaging reports, people do claim to experience success with natural alternatives. Since most medical doctors have close associations with pharmaceutical companies, it is very unlikely that your doctor will mention natural alternatives to medication. If your doctor determines that you need medication to protect your heart, you may want to discuss the possibilities of natural alternatives. Your doctor should tell you what is available on the market and explain the pros and cons of using alternative remedies to achieve a healthy heart. Two natural alternatives to medicines that seem to provide some success in individuals with risk factors for heart disease are vitamins E and C.

Vitamin E has been associated with good health for many years. In relation to coronary heart disease, many studies show that Vitamin E works as a preventive method. There are three types of cholesterol that you need to monitor to keep heart disease at bay. HDL (High-Density Lipoprotein) is considered "good" cholesterol, LDL (Low Density Lipoprotein) is considered "bad" cholesterol. Of these, Vitamin E helps to reduce the amount of LDL cholesterol. There have been recent reports that oppose the beneficial aspects of Vitamin E so you should definitely consult with your doctor before taking vitamin E for high cholesterol.

To keep heart disease at bay, it is essential that your body is free of inflammation. Vitamin C is an antioxidant that is responsible for developing and restoring body tissue. It is particularly beneficial in the fight to reduce your risk of heart disease. There are currently many studies on C-reactive protein (CRP) and how it relates to heart disease. CRP exists in the body when there is a presence of inflammation. This inflammation may be a telltale sign that an individual may be at risk for developing heart disease.

So, how much vitamin C is sufficient for reducing the risk of CRP? Studies that report a reduction in CRP levels provided participants with 500 milligrams of vitamin C each day. The study found that most of the participants experienced more than a 20% reduction in CRP levels. These studies are new, but the preliminary studies show promise.

As with medication, there is no guarantee that vitamin supplementation will work to alleviate your risk factors for heart disease. If you discuss the matter with your doctor and they advise you to take supplements, never take more than what is recommended. Some vitamins have unpleasant side effects when taken in excess amounts.

## **Mesothelioma**

Up until the 1980s, asbestos was commonly used as an effective method of insulation. That is until it was discovered that asbestos workers were frequently becoming ill and being diagnosed with Mesothelioma.

### **What is Mesothelioma?**

Mesothelioma is a form of malignant cancer that attacks the lining of the chest. There are basically three types of Mesothelioma that can afflict an individual: Pleural Mesothelioma refers to a cancer of the lining of the lung (pleura). Peritoneal Mesothelioma affects the lining of the abdominal cavity (peritoneum). Pericardial Mesothelioma is a cancer of the lining surrounding the heart (pericardium). Pleural Mesothelioma is the most prevalent of the three types.

### **Causes**

Mesothelioma usually results from exposure to asbestos. Continuously breathing in asbestos fibers can cause severe damage to the lining of the lungs.

### **Symptoms**

It can take as many as 50 years or more for symptoms of Mesothelioma to appear. Some individuals in the early stages of Mesothelioma may not experience any symptoms. When they do they are general in nature and may resemble viral pneumonia. A health professional makes a diagnosis of Mesothelioma by performing a chest x-ray. If any of the symptoms exist and the test results reveal the individual has a buildup of fluid, the health professional may suspect Mesothelioma. Mesothelioma is characterized by the following symptoms:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Persistent cough
- Fever
- Night sweats
- Weight loss
- Pain or swelling in abdomen
- Excess fluid
- Bowel obstruction
- Anemia
- Swelling of the feet

### **Treatment**

Depending on the diagnosis made by a health professional, there are various treatments available for individuals suffering from Mesothelioma. However, like other diseases caused by an exposure to toxic substances, there is currently no cure for Mesothelioma. One medical treatment that may offer some benefit is Alimta® (Pemetrexed). In 2002, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Alimta in certain cases for patients with a malignant form of Mesothelioma before they actually completed a review of the drug. The FDA's decision was based on the results of a study that revealed that a significant number of individuals treated with Alimta experienced fewer symptoms and lived longer.

Other forms of treatment include surgery to remove the diseased lung, radiation therapy to reduce the size of the tumor, chemotherapy, and alternative medicine. Photodynamic therapy, an experimental procedure that attempts to kill the tumor cells, shows some promise for Mesothelioma patients.

### **Legal Options**

The mere fact that an individual has been diagnosed with Mesothelioma is insufficient grounds for pursuing damages. It is imperative that the individual and his legal counsel determine where exposure took place and with what asbestos product.

**Major Legal Cases**

There have been numerous lawsuits related to asbestos-related illnesses. In 1982, Johns-Manville Corporation, at one time the largest producer of asbestos, was forced to resort to bankruptcy due to the overwhelming number of lawsuits filed against them.

More recently, five large and very well known companies are seeking bankruptcy. The five companies, W.R. Grace, Owens-Corning, Armstrong World, U.S. Gypsum and Federal Mogul, all have suffered economically due to asbestos-related lawsuits.

**References and Resources**

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Food and Drug Administration  
(<http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2004/NEW01018.html>)  
American Cancer Society (<http://www.cancer.org>)

## **Berylliosis**

What is Berylliosis/Chronic Beryllium Disease?

Chronic Beryllium Disease (CBD) is characterized by the inflammation of the lungs caused by exposure to Beryllium fumes or dust. There are a number of occupations more afflicted with CBD. The industries in which Beryllium can be found include the following:

Electronics  
Atomic energy  
Laboratory work  
Metal working  
Ceramic manufacturing  
Extraction  
Dental work

### **Causes**

In 1979, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) reported that exposure to Beryllium causes cancer in humans.<sup>1</sup> This finding ultimately led to the understanding that exposure to Beryllium is what causes CBD. When individuals inhale Beryllium dust or fumes, they may develop CBD.

### **Symptoms**

CBD exists in two forms: acute and chronic. Although the incidences of CBD in the acute form are now rare, the disease is characterized by respiratory conditions such as pneumonia or bronchitis. In the chronic form, it takes a lot longer for symptoms to appear. An allergic reaction is usually the cause of this form of CBD. The following are the general symptoms associated with CBD:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath, especially with activity
- Fatigue
- Weight loss and/or loss of appetite
- Fevers
- Night sweats

### **Treatment**

CBD is an incurable disease. There are numerous medications available to treat the symptoms. Steroids are by far the most widely used form of treatment for CBD because they can reduce the inflammation that can build up in the lungs. The most common prescribed steroids are Adrenocortical, Dexamethasone, and Prednisolone. Although steroid treatment for CBD has shown to be successful, the possible side effects associated with steroid use may deem steroids unacceptable treatment for some individuals. In advanced cases of CBD, lung transplants offer the best hope of survival.

For those individuals whose symptoms are related to wounds, they may just require a health professional to remove particles of Beryllium that may have become embedded in the skin because the individual suffered a scrape or cut.

### **Legal Options**

Although some individuals suffering from CBD have been successful in court, the process can be very frustrating. Perhaps the most frustrating issue for victims is proving when the exposure actually occurred. Since CBD can take up to as many as 40 years to appear, discovering the origin of the onset can be difficult.

### **Major Legal Cases**

Although not a legal case, the establishment of The Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act of 2000 (H.R. 5408) to compensate Department of Energy workers diagnosed with CBD has helped legal professionals in their lawsuits. The program grants those

who qualify, a lump sum payment of \$150,000 for disability and future associated medical expenses.<sup>2</sup>

### **References and Resources**

<sup>1</sup> Harvard Report on Cancer Prevention, Volume 1: Causes of Human Cancer, Cancer Causes & Control, An International Journal of Studies of Cancer in Human Populations Official Journal of the International Association of Cancer Registries, Volume 7 Supplement November 1996 ISSN 0957-5243

<sup>2</sup> Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) (<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/ocas/pdfs/theact/title36.pdf>)

National Cancer Institute (<http://www.nci.nih.gov>)

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (<http://www.osha.gov>)

Environmental Protection Agency (<http://www.epa.gov>)