HEALTHY TIPS

New Study Claims: Diet Rich in Omega 3s may Help Lower Migraines

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Boosting the intake of foods rich in omega 3 fatty acids like seafood, plant oils, and nuts and seeds may help lower the headache frequency when compared to a diet with a normal intake of omega 3 and omega 6.

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This was concluded in a study published in the BMJ.

Unfortunately, modern-day diets are lower in omega 3 and omega 6. However, these fatty acids are the precursors to oxylipins or molecules that participate in the regulation of inflammation and pain.

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Could Omega 3s Be the Key to Reducing Migraines?

The oxylipins that come from omega 3 are linked with pain-lowering effects whereas the ones from omega 6 tend to make the pain worse and trigger a migraine.

The studies done on the supplementation with omega 3 haven't been conclusive enough.

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This is why the research team from the US wanted to explore if a diet abundant in omega 3 would help elevate the pain-lowering 17-HDHA and decrease the headaches' frequency and severity.

The results they had were made on the basis of 182 patients in the University of North Carolina. 88 percent were females and the average age was 38 years.

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They had migraine headaches 5-20 days every month. They were randomly assigned to one of three types of diets and followed them for 16 weeks.

The control diet contained usual levels of omega 3s and 6s. Both interventional diets increased the intake of omega 3. However, one of them kept the intake of omega 6s the same as of the control group whereas the other one lowered the intake of omega 6.

During the study, the participants got regular counseling about their diets. What's more, they fulfilled a HIT-6, a questionnaire that assesses the impact of headaches on their lives.

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What Did the Trial Help the Scientists Conclude?

In the 16-week period, both interventional diets elevated the 17-HDHA levels in comparison to the control diet. While the HIT-6 scores bettered in both interventional groups, they weren't significantly different from the ones of the control group.

Still, the frequency of headaches was significantly lowered in both intervention groups.

The high intake of omega 3 in the participants' diets led to a reduction of 1.3 headache hours on the daily and two headache days per month.

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Moreover, the low omega 6 and high omega 3 diet group experienced 1.7 headache hours per day reduction and four headache days per month, suggesting there are extra benefits from the decrease of omega 6.

What's more, the intervention group reported shorter and less serious headaches than those in the control group.

It Was Quality Study, but not without Limitations

Although it's a quality trial that was well-designed, the researchers emphasize some limitations like the inability of the patients to stick to a certain diet considering most of them were young women. Hence, these results can't be applied to kids, older adults, men, or other populations.

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The researchers point out that even though these diets didn't better the participants' quality of life significantly, they did lower the severity and frequency of the headaches they experienced.

Sources:

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