

Newsletter

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Nutrition for Neck and Back Pain / Awareness of Analgesic Use Risks

Nutrition for Neck and Back Pain

Estimates show that between 5 percent and 10 percent of the U.S. population uses nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) for pain relief. While NSAIDs are effective in treating both acute and chronic pain, they also may cause a myriad of complications, ranging from headaches and stomach ulcers to dizziness, constipation and diarrhea. A new study indicates that omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oil may be just as effective as NSAIDs in treating pain, without causing the same side effects.

In this study, scientists evaluated 250 patients who were suffering from nonsurgical neck pain or back pain and who were taking NSAIDs for pain relief. The patients were asked to take 2,400 milligrams of omega-3 supplements per day for two weeks and then to reduce the dosage to 1,200 milligrams daily. Approximately one month after starting supplementation, the patients were mailed a questionnaire asking them to document their level of pain, use of NSAIDs and any side effects caused by the supplements.

One hundred twenty-five patients returned the questionnaire, an average of 75 days after taking the supplements. Seventy-eight percent were taking 1,200 milligrams of omega-3s; the remainder had continued taking 2,400 milligrams. More than half of the patients (59 percent) reported they had discontinued using NSAIDs for pain control; 60 percent said their overall pain levels had improved; and 80 percent stated that they were satisfied with the improvement in pain. No adverse side effects were reported.

As the results of this study show, omega-3 fatty acids appear just as effective as NSAIDs, if not more so, in relieving certain kinds of neck and back pain. That said, there is no better form of natural back pain relief than an adjustment from your local doctor of chiropractic. If you suffer from neck or back pain, make an appointment with your DC today; they will find the source of your pain and treat you accordingly – and they might even recommend some omega-3s.

Maroon JC, Bost JW. Omega-3 fatty acids (fish oil) as an anti-inflammatory: an alternative to nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for discogenic pain. *Surgical Neurology*, April 2006; 65(4): 326-331.

Awareness of Analgesic Use Risks

Alabama scientists say over-the-counter and prescription analgesics are often used inappropriately by people ignorant of any potential harm. A study conducted by the University of Alabama-Birmingham is said to be the first to look at attitudes and behaviors of people who frequently use painkillers.

Of the 807 people surveyed who used patented and prescription painkillers, also known as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, 54 percent were not aware of the potential side effects of the drugs. And nearly 30 percent said they didn't consider themselves at risk for any side effects associated with painkiller use.

The American Gastroenterological Association says more than 36 million people take over-the-counter or prescription NSAIDs daily for pain relief, headaches and arthritis, with nearly 25 percent exceeding the recommended dosage.

The study appears in the November issue of the Journal of Rheumatology 2005