BENEFITS OF SUPPLEMENTS IN LUPUS AND RELATED DISORDERS

Dietary Supplements and Autoimmune Disorders

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Dietary supplements are used to correct nutrient deficiencies, enhance the immune system and general health, and reduce inflammation in autoimmune disease.

Nutrient Deficiencies

With increased knowledge of immune function, the importance of lifestyle and diet in patients with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), rheumatoid arthritis (RA), and related connective tissue disorders has been medically proven. However, even with good nutrition, nutrient deficiencies can occur. Nutrient deficiencies are related to the increased nutrient demands that occur in disease states and to depleted nutrients in food sources. Depleted nutrients in our food supply are related to poor soil and deficiencies caused during food manufacturing and processing.

Dietary Supplements

Dietary supplements are an essential part of any autoimmune disease healing protocol. Dietary supplements are used to correct nutrient deficiencies, enhance healing and immune function, reduce inflammation, relieve joint pain, and promote general health. After all, in any assessment of prognosis or disease outcome, the patient’s general health status is a primary consideration.

Precautions

However, as with any over-the-counter medication, caution is also needed. Certain supplements, such as zinc, an antioxidant mineral that stimulates the immune system, should not be taken in amounts that exceed the minimum daily requirement. And supplements such as vitamin D, which are used to correct the deficiencies customarily seen in people with autoimmune disorders, should only be used in recommended amounts since higher doses can be toxic.

In addition, supplements free of soy, wheat and other common allergens should be used. People with lupus and related connective tissue disorders are often allergic to wheat or find that wheat and other grains cause flares or a worsening in symptoms.

Dietary Recommendations

* Omega-3 oils are used to correct dietary deficiencies and reduce inflammation. Deficiencies of omega-6 oils also exist in lupus, suggesting that the metabolism of fatty
oils is altered during the disease process. Supplements containing GLA/DHA are recommended.

* The antioxidants, vitamin E, vitamin B3, vitamin B12, vitamin B5, vitamin A, and selenium are reported to reduce inflammation in patients with lupus.
* The digestive enzyme bromelain is also known to reduce inflammation.
* Magnesium is used to reduce myalgia (muscle pain) in patients with lupus and related disorders. In general, 500 mg for every 1000 mg of calcium is recommended.
* In patients using corticosteroids, 2000 mg of calcium along with 800 units of vitamin D and 2 mg vitamin K are recommended to prevent bone loss.
* DHEA using 50 mg daily for men and 15-25 mg daily for women is reported to help relieve symptoms in mild to moderate lupus and it may allow patients to get by on a lower dose of corticosteroids.
* Probiotics such as Life Extension’s Life Flora or products containing FOS are recommended for gastrointestinal health and healthy immune system function. Probiotics are reported to normalize immune responses, inhibit chronic inflammation and improve inflammatory conditions with an autoimmune component including asthma and Crohn’s disease. In his book on aging, Dr. Perricone recommends adding kefir, a fermented probiotic milk drink from the Caucasus Mountains in the former Soviet Union.
* Pomegranate is used to prevent the development of atherosclerosis and reduce symptoms related to atherosclerosis. In addition, pomegranate supports skin structure, and suppresses the activity of nuclear factor-kappa beta, an immune system chemical that promotes inflammation. An 8-ounce daily serving of pomegranate juice or 1 ounce of juice concentrate is recommended.
* SAMe is used as an antidepressant that protects the liver and reduces inflammation in arthritis. SAMe doses up to 1600 mg daily are used in divided doses along with trimethylglycine (TMG), vitamin B6, B12 and folic acid for optimal effectiveness.
* The amino acids DL-phenylalanine and tyrosine are used to reduce chronic pain and muscle ache by improving the function of neurotransmitters and protecting endorphins.
* Plant sterols and sterolins, found in immunomodulators such as Mocducare, are recommended for balancing the immune system using 20 mg three times daily on an empty stomach.
* Methylsulfonylmethane (MSM), glucosamine, and chondroitin are recommended for improving joint health and building cartilage.
* Ginkgo biloba, using 60 to 120 mg twice daily, is recommended for reducing inflammation and improving circulation through the kidneys.
* Specific supplements for stress recommended for patients with lupus and other autoimmune disorders have been found to reduce inflammation and promote healing.

### Supplements to Avoid

Supplements that should not be used in excess of minimum dietary recommendations in patients with lupus include zinc because of its stimulatory effects on the immune system; and tryptophan and 5-hydroxytryptophan because of the abnormal tryptophan metabolism that occurs in lupus, which can increase autoantibody production.

### Resources

Denise Mann, Diet Linked to Lupus Symptoms, MedicineNet.com, Feb 12, 2001


David Tuttle, Pomegranate Reverses Atherosclerosis and Slows the Progression of Prostate Cancer, Life Extension Journal, Feb 2007, 73-79.


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