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New research indicates that higher intakes of vitamin E in the forms of alpha, beta and gamma-tocopherol may be associated with a reduced risk of lung cancer. In this study population, vitamin E as alpha-tocopherol reduced the risk of lung cancer by as much as 61 percent.

HIGHER VITAMIN E INTAKE ASSOCIATED WITH LOWER LUNG CANCER RISK

A study published in the September 1, 2008, issue of the International Journal of Cancer evaluated the effect of alpha, beta, gamma and delta tocopherols on lung cancer risk. Until recently, studies of vitamin E and cancer have focused on the alpha-tocopherol form of the vitamin. However, the lesser known fractions (in particular gamma-tocopherol) have increasingly been the subject of scientific research.

In an ongoing study of 1,088 incident lung cancer cases and 1,414 healthy controls, researchers studied the associations between four tocopherols (alpha-, beta-, gamma-, and delta-tocopherol) in the diet and lung cancer risk.

Higher intakes of alpha, beta and gamma-tocopherols were found to be associated with a reduced risk of lung cancer. When groups with the highest and lowest alpha-tocopherol levels were compared, those with intakes in the highest 25 percent showed a 61 percent reduction in lung cancer risk. For both beta-tocopherol and gamma-tocopherol, subjects whose intake was highest experienced a 44 percent lower risk compared to the lowest intake groups. No significant association was observed between delta-tocopherol and lung cancer risk.

Since this is the first report of the independent associations of the four forms of dietary tocopherols (alpha-, beta-, gamma- and delta-tocopherol) on lung cancer risk, the researchers suggest further research concerning the various forms of vitamin E and cancer risk.

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