

Daily intake of Vitamin E may help improve fatty liver disease: Study

In an NIH-funded study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, research found that daily Vitamin E improved the livers of patients who have a type of liver disease known as nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH). The study results are welcome findings because there are currently no approved treatments for the disease, says a Saint Louis University researcher on the project.

Increasingly common, NASH is characterised by excessive fat that causes inflammation and damage in the liver; NASH affects 3 to 4% of all adults in the U.S. Linked to weight gain and obesity, NASH can lead to cirrhosis, liver cancer and death.

"Fatty liver disease is a growing problem in the U.S., and we currently have no approved medication to offer patients," said Brent Tetri, M.D., a hepatologist at Saint Louis University Liver Centre and study researcher. "With this study, we're pleased to find that Vitamin E should help some of our patients."

During 96 weeks of treatment, patients with NASH were given 800 IU daily of the natural form of Vitamin E or a placebo. Researchers found that 43% of those treated with Vitamin E showed significant improvement of the liver; only 19% of those who received a placebo improved.

Separately, researchers also studied the effects of a drug, pioglitazone, in treating NASH. It, too, improved the condition of patients' livers, although its use was associated with weight gain.

Researchers caution that neither treatment improved liver disease in all patients, and that diabetic patients were not included in this study. Diabetes is common in NASH patients, and further research is needed to determine if Vitamin E or pioglitazone will be appropriate treatments for diabetic patients.

"This study is a promising step in treating NASH," said Tetri, professor of internal medicine at Saint Louis University.

The study was published in the advance online edition of the *New England Journal of Medicine* on April 28.

Source: Saint Louis University School of Medicine

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