

Omega-3 Fatty Acids Lower the Risk of Mini-Stroke and Brain Abnormalities as We Age by 40 Percent

By: John Phillip, Natural News

Strokes, mini-strokes or infarcts and vascular dementia, along with heart disease, account for one in three deaths each year. Expert analysis shows that nearly 200,000 of these deaths are fully preventable by following simple lifestyle modification steps that dramatically lower the risk of being added to this statistical pool. Researchers cite changes in health habits, such as stopping smoking, more physical activity and less salt in the diet along with managing high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes as the most significant steps for lowering vascular disease risk.

A research group from the University of Eastern Finland has published the results of a study in the *Journal of the American Heart Association* that explains how high long-chain omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid content in blood may lower the risk of small brain infarcts and other brain abnormalities in the elderly. Brain infarcts dramatically increase the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia that currently affect more than 5 million individuals in the US. Many experts warn that cases of Alzheimer's will quadruple over the next 15 to 20 years.

Omega-3 fats promote optimal brain health and lower dementia risk by 40 percent

The study was the first to combine dietary questionnaires with blood testing that analyzed the levels of plasma phospholipid omega-3 polyunsaturated fats (PUFA) to determine reduction in risk of small brain infarcts and future dementia incidence. As part of the Cardiovascular Health Study in the US, researchers reviewed a cohort of 3,660 people aged 65 and older. Each participant underwent brain scans to detect silent brain infarcts, or small lesions in the brain that can cause loss of thinking skills, dementia and stroke. Scans were performed again five years later on 2,313 of the participants.

From prior studies, scientists know that silent brain infarcts are present in about 20 percent of otherwise healthy elderly adults. In this study, the team found that those who had high long-chain omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid content in their blood had a 40 percent lower risk of having small brain infarcts compared to those with low content of these fatty acids in their blood. The study also determined that those with the highest levels of omega-3 PUFA fats had significantly fewer changes in the white matter of their brains.

The study authors concluded, "Our findings in these older men and women suggest that circulating long chain omega-3 PUFA concentrations, a biomarker of regular fish consumption, are associated with lower risk and could be beneficial for the prevention of certain subclinical brain abnormalities that are commonly observed in the elderly."

Peer-reviewed results from this study and volumes of past research bodies demonstrate the critical importance of regular consumption of fatty fish (several servings per week) or regular supplementation with a purified fish oil product (1,200 to 2,400 mg EPA/DHA daily) to maintain optimal brain and cardiovascular health.

Sources for this article include:

<http://www.nutraingredients.com>

<http://jaha.ahajournals.org>