American Diabetes Association.

NEWS RELEASE

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Extra Omega-3 Fatty Acids Reduce Severe Arrhythmia-Related Events In Patients with Diabetes and A Previous Heart Attack

Alexandria, VA (November 21, 2011) – Eating a daily additional amount of Omega-3 fatty acids may help protect older people with diabetes who have experienced a heart attack, according to a study being published in the December issue of *Diabetes Care*.

Subjects in the study, a secondary analysis of the Alpha Omega Trial, consumed margarine supplemented with daily recommended doses of Omega-3 fatty acids (either 400 mg/day EPA-DHA, 2 g/day ALA, a combination of all three, or placebo) over a 40-month period. The study included 1,014 people with diabetes, ages 60-80, who had previously experienced a heart attack. The study found that all groups receiving additional amounts of these fatty acids experienced a lower incidence of events indicative of severe arrhythmias (sudden death, cardiac arrest and placement of cardioverter defibrillators), but only the group receiving a combined supplementation of all three fatty acids experienced a significantly (84 percent) lower incidence than those who received placebo.

There was no significant reduction in fatal heart attacks among any of the groups. However, those who received all three fatty acids did see a significantly (72 percent) lower incidence, compared to those who took placebo, in the combined endpoint of fatal heart attacks and indicators of severe arrhythmias.

“While more research is needed to definitively determine the role of these fatty acids in protecting people from ventricular arrhythmias, they seem to provide a benefit to the heart attack patients who also had diabetes,” said lead researcher Professor Daan Kromhout, MPH, PhD, Division of Human Nutrition, Wageningen University, in the Netherlands. “This is the first study that showed a significant protective effect of Omega-3 fatty acids in high-risk patients with diabetes who were on state-of-the-art drug treatment for their heart attack.”

Omega-3 fatty acids are essential to human health, but the body cannot make them. They are found in fish (such as salmon and tuna), plant oils (such as soybean oil or canola oil) and walnuts. The main results of the Alpha Omega Trial and recently published results from other trials did not show an effect of Omega-3 fatty acids on indicators of ventricular arrhythmias. This may be due to the fact that the patients in the present study, who had the combination of a previous heart attack and diabetes, were at higher risk of severe arrhythmias than patients who only experienced a heart attack.

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Diabetes Care, published by the American Diabetes Association, is the leading peer-reviewed journal of clinical research into one of the nation's leading causes of death by disease. Diabetes also is a leading cause of heart disease and stroke, as well as the leading cause of adult blindness, kidney failure, and non-traumatic amputations.

The American Diabetes Association is leading the fight to stop diabetes and its deadly consequences and fighting for those affected by diabetes. The Association funds research to prevent, cure and manage diabetes; delivers services to hundreds of communities; provides objective and credible information; and gives voice to those denied their rights because of diabetes. Founded in 1940, our mission is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes. For more information please call the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383) or visit www.diabetes.org. Information from both these sources is available in English and Spanish.

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