

Multiple Sclerosis: Complementary/Alternative Medicine

Sudden transient motor and sensory disturbances, including blurred vision, dizziness, muscle weakness, and tingling sensations

Evidence of demyelination on MRI

QUICK REVIEW

- Multiple sclerosis (MS) appears to be an autoimmune disease, based on a great deal of circumstantial evidence. A high intake of saturated fatty acids and animal fat is linked to MS.

Many studies have demonstrated a reduced capacity to detoxify free radicals in patients with MS.

Dr. Roy Swank, Professor of Neurology at the University of Oregon Medical School, has provided convincing evidence that a diet low in saturated fats, maintained over a long period of time, tends to retard the disease process and reduce the number of attacks.

Supplementation with sources of the omega-6 essential fatty acid linoleic acid for the treatment of MS has been investigated in at least three double blind trials.

Natural alpha-interferon therapy is showing promising results.

TREATMENT SUMMARY

Treatment of MS with diet, lifestyle modification, and supplementation should begin as soon as possible, as the earlier in the disease process this therapy is initiated the better the results will be. Several nonspecific measures are important, including avoidance of excessive fatigue, emotional stress, and marked temperature changes.

While not proven highly effective, the natural therapy for MS will help, and it poses no threat to a patient's health. In fact, it is quite healthful since the recommendations decrease the risk of atherosclerosis and other degenerative diseases. However, once MS has progressed to significant disability, it is unlikely to be affected to any great degree by these measures.

Diet

Swank's dietary protocol is recommended:

- Saturated fat intake should be no more than 10 grams per day
- Daily intake of polyunsaturated oils should be 40-50 grams (margarine, shortening, and hydrogenated oils are not allowed)
- Normal amounts of protein are recommended
- Fish should be eaten three or more times a week

Fresh whole foods should be emphasized and consumption of animal foods (with the exception of cold-water fish) should be reduced, if not completely eliminated.

Nutritional Supplements

- High-potency multiple-vitamin-and-mineral formula
- Vitamin E: 800 IU per day
- Selenium: 200-400 mcg per day (including the amount in the multiple)
- Vitamin B12 (methylcobalamin): 2 mg per day in the case of vitamin B12 deficiency; dosages up to 60 mg daily when using it as a therapy
- Flaxseed oil: 1 tbs per day
- Pancreatin (10X): 350-700 mg three times per day between meals (on an empty stomach)

Botanical Medicines

- *Ginkgo biloba* extract (24% ginkgo flavonglycosides): 40-80 mg three times per day