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Red Wine May Prevent High Blood Pressure in Older Women?

Mar 25, 2008, 05:11

Further evidence that red wine may be beneficial for the heart has emerged in the form of a Spanish study, which says polyphenols found in red wine help keep blood vessels healthy and prevent high blood pressure.

Older women who are postmenopausal are naturally prone to high blood pressure because of the paucity of female sex hormones. Estrogen especially keeps the lining of the lining of the blood vessels smooth. After menopause estrogen levels decline leading to high blood pressure or hypertension.

Earlier studies have highlighted the usefulness of red wine in preserving heart health, but very few have focused on older women. The compound resveratrol found in red wine is thought to be useful in protecting from heart disease. It is speculated that polyphenols found in red wine exert estrogenic effects on blood vessels.

In the current study, which appears in the latest issue of the journal Hypertension, researchers from University of Granada and the University Complutense of Madrid, used female rat models to gauge the effect of polyphenols on hypertension.



The female rats were engineered to have menopause as well as hypertension. Half the rats were given the beneficial red wine polyphenols along with their normal diet, while the rest were treated as a control group.

After five weeks, the blood pressure of female rats treated with red wine polyphenols was at least 9 percent lower than the control group.

"All these results suggest that a chronic treatment with RWPs reduces hypertension and vascular dysfunction through reduction in vascular oxidative stress in female SHR in a manner independent of the ovarian function," the authors led by Rocío Lopez-Sepulveda wrote.

Polyphenols are thought to be important nutrients for human health especially in combating oxidative stress, which is a leading cause of cardiovascular disease. Dietary sources of polyphenols include apples, blackberries, blueberries, cantaloupe, cherries, cranberries, grapes, pears, plums, raspberries, strawberries, broccoli, cabbage, celery, onion and parsley.

Polyphenols are also found in red wine, chocolate and green tea.

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