Living With Vasculitis

Diet

A healthy diet is important for the vasculitis patient, especially for those who are struggling with food intake. Healthy eating will, by definition, help anyone who has diabetes or who have gained weight and wants to do all they can nutritionally to stave off infection and disease long term.

Some vasculitis patients will require a special diet and this will be arranged via the hospital dietician. It is important to adhere to this regime.

If you do not need a special diet, you should aim to cut down on starchy foods - bread, potatoes, rice and pasta, replacing these with fresh fruit and vegetables. You should also avoid processed food and grain fed meat. The omega 3 fats in oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, trout and sardines are beneficial in autoimmune disease. Also omega 3 can be found in flaxseed, walnuts and green leafy vegetables.

Omega 3 fish oil supplements containing EPA and DHA can be helpful. However, it should be noted that these do react with some medication. These, and other supplements, should not be taken without discussion with your doctor or nutritionist.

A sensible eating regime should be adopted especially for those patients taking steroids. This will help control weight gain. Excessive dieting is not recommended for the vasculitis patient. Also, when taking steroids there is an increased risk of developing osteoporosis. Increased calcium in the diet can help prevent osteoporosis developing. Eating broccoli, yogurt, skimmed milk and tinned sardines are recommended.

Where the drug regime allows the drinking of alcohol this should only be in moderation. There are some immune-suppressant drugs where drinking alcohol is contra-indicated. Your doctor will discuss this with you if it is relevant in your case.

For further information about nutrition, diet and lifestyle - Ani Richardson is a lupus patient with a first class honours BSc and an MSc in Nutritional Medicine. She recommends a useful recipe book: "The everything anti-inflammation diet book" by Karlyn Grimes - ISBN 978-1-4405-1029-8