Vegan Diets May Also Help Ease Nerve Pain of Diabetes Sufferers

May 26, 2015

A low-fat eating plan that contains fresh veggies, beans, whole grains and other plant foods might relieve nerve pain associated with type 2 diabetes and could ultimately reduce patients' likelihood of losing a limb to the disease, say findings from a small pilot study published in the journal Nutrition & Diabetes and reported by LiveScience.com.

This pain, called diabetic neuropathy, is a type of circulation-related nerve damage that affects as many as half of all people living with type 2 diabetes. If left untreated, the condition can cause searing pain, ulcerous infections and is the leading cause of limb amputations for those with the metabolic disease.

For the study, researchers put 17 overweight adults with diabetic neuropathy on a low-fat, vegan diet for 20 weeks then compared their reported pain levels with 17 other adults who did not change their eating habits.

By the end of the trial, the group on the vegan diet reported a significant drop in nerve pain. Follow-up medical tests also showed this group enjoyed improved blood circulation, nerve function and could manage their blood sugar levels with less medication. What's more, the vegan eaters also lost an average of 14 pounds.

"We hypothesize that by increasing your insulin sensitivity and improving blood sugar levels, you are allowing your body time to fix the nerve damage," said Cameron Wells, MPH, a registered dietician at the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine and one of the authors of the study.

Scientists regard diabetes sufferers switching to a plant-based diet as a possible simple fix to a complex problem. There is no cure for diabetic neuropathy—doctors simply manage the condition with pain medication and tell patients to be careful about cleaning their wounds to prevent infection.

For more information about switching to a vegan diet, click here.

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/vegan-diabetes-neuropathy-27286-2751