

New Research Investigates the Use of Diet and Supplements in Ex-Smokers with Lung Disease

A new medical research study will investigate two interventions that could potentially slow down the progression of chronic lung disease in middle-aged ex-smokers.

The study will examine whether different anti-inflammatory treatments, such as dietary antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids, and/or statins (a type of medication used to lower cholesterol) can slow the decline of lung function in people with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), the lung disease which affects smokers.

Professor Guy Marks, Chief Investigator, Woolcock Institute of Medical Research said, “Preliminary evidence from previous studies suggests that nutrients, such as antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids in the diet, as well as statins, may have beneficial effects in people with lung disease.”

“We will investigate whether antioxidants, omega-3 fatty acids and statin treatment reduces inflammation in the lungs. By measuring lung function, inflammation, other symptoms and quality of life, we will be able to see if any of these treatments has slowed down the progress of the disease.

“Some people, even after giving up smoking, continue to experience a progressive decline in lung function. We do not know how to stop this happening, but this is one of the questions our study will address,” Professor Marks added.

Participants will be given either dietary supplements, statins, a placebo, or a combination of these.

We need people aged between 35 and 60 years who are ex-smokers, and have a history of chest infections or have had a long-term cough, phlegm or breathlessness.

COPD is ranked fourth as the cause of death in Australia and is often referred to as chronic bronchitis and emphysema. COPD causes the airways to narrow, limiting the flow of air and causing shortness of breath. Current treatments, with the exception of stopping smoking for those with early disease and long-term home oxygen therapy very late in the disease, do not alter the outcome.

The independent study is being funded by an NH&MRC grant and people can participate at two sites: Woolcock Institute of Medical Research in Glebe, Sydney and John Hunter Hospital, Newcastle.

People interested in participating in the study can call 1800 828 717 to register.

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