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According to a new Swedish study, men with a higher intake of dietary zinc may reduce the risk of prostate-related death.

DIETARY ZINC REDUCES RISK OF DEATH FROM PROSTATE CANCER

The mineral zinc is involved in numerous enzymes and many essential cellular functions, including health of the immune system and DNA repair. Although previous research supports a role for zinc in prostate carcinogenesis, epidemiologic data are currently inconsistent. Little to no data on cancer-specific survival and zinc intake has been reported.

In a recent study, researchers sought to determine whether dietary zinc, assessed near the time of prostate cancer diagnosis, is associated with an improvement in survival.

This population-based cohort consisted of 525 Swedish men less than 80 years of age with a diagnosis of prostate cancer made between 1989 and 1994. Study participants completed food-frequency questionnaires, and zinc intake was derived from nutrient databases. Deaths from prostate cancer as well as from all causes were documented through February 2009.

After an average follow-up of 6.4 years, 218 (42%) men died of prostate cancer and 257 (49%) died of other causes. Compared to the group with lowest zinc intakes, high dietary zinc intake was associated with a reduced risk of prostate cancer-specific mortality. The association was stronger in men with localized tumors. Zinc intake was not associated with mortality from other causes.

The results of this study suggest that high dietary intake of zinc is associated with lower prostate cancer-specific mortality after diagnosis, particularly in men with localized tumors.

Epstein MM, et al. Dietary zinc and prostate cancer survival in a Swedish cohort. 2011. Am J Clin Nutr 93(3):586-93.