Higher folates, not antioxidants, can reduce hearing loss risk in men

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Increased intakes of antioxidant vitamins have no bearing on whether or not a man will develop hearing loss, but higher folate intake can decrease his risk by 20 percent, according to new research presented at the 2009 American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Foundation (AAO-HNSF) Annual Meeting & OTO EXPO, in San Diego, CA.

The study, which identified 3,559 cases of men with hearing loss, found that there was no beneficial association with increased intakes of antioxidant vitamins such as C, E, and beta carotene. However, the authors found that men over the age of 60 who have a high intake of foods and supplement high in folates have a 20 percent decrease in risk of developing hearing loss.

Hearing loss is the most common sensory disorder in the United States, affecting more than 36 million people. High folate foods include leafy vegetables such as spinach, asparagus, turnip greens, lettuces, dried or fresh beans and peas, fortified cereal products, sunflower seeds and certain other fruits and vegetables are rich sources of folate. Baker's yeast, liver and liver products also contain high amounts of folate.

The authors believe this is the largest study to delve prospectively into the relation between dietary intake and hearing loss. They used the most recent figures from the Health Professionals Follow-up Study cohort from years 1986 to 2004, a group consisting of 51,529 male health professionals. They were first enrolled into this study in 1986 and filled

out detailed health and diet questionnaires every other year. The authors believe their findings can allow greater education, prevention, and screening efforts.

Source: American Academy of Otolaryngology