

# Slow progression of dementia with b-complex vitamins

October 26 2010, By Gale Smith

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Large doses of B-complex vitamins could reduce the rate of brain shrinkage by half in elderly people with memory problems and slow the progression of dementia.

A two-year clinical trial in England has shown that B vitamins, including B-6, B-12 and folic acid, slow down [mild cognitive impairment](#) (MCI), a condition which is a major risk factor for Alzheimer disease and other forms of dementia.

Dr. Gustavo C. Román, medical director of the Alzheimer & Dementia Center at the Methodist Neurological Institute in Houston, said that patients who already exhibit signs of dementia and test positive for high levels of homocysteine are more likely to respond well to the large doses of B vitamins. Homocysteine is an amino acid in the blood, and high blood levels are linked to an increased risk of developing Alzheimer disease.

Román has seen the impact of these B vitamins in his patients and found that injections of B-complex vitamins are more effective than oral supplements.

"I'm not saying that everyone who takes B vitamins will prevent dementia," Roman said. "But in the right dosage and for the appropriate patients, the vitamin B-12 treatment could be a step toward modifying disease progression."

Approximately 50 percent of people diagnosed with MCI go on to develop Alzheimer disease within five years. More than five million Americans are estimated to have Alzheimer disease, the most common form of [dementia](#). Román said it is time to seek a medical professional if you notice the following signs that could be symptoms for Alzheimer's:

- Forgetting recently learned information
- Problems with planning and/or solving problems, as working with numbers becoming increasingly difficult
- Great difficulty in completing daily tasks
- Losing track of the time or day; confusion about being in a particular location, like not remembering how they got there
- Difficulty reading and/or judging distances, depth perception, etc.
- Language problems that arise when speaking or writing
- Misplacing items and not being able to retrace steps to recover them
- Loss of skills in judgment making
- Noticeable changes in mood and personality, irritability, aggression
- Social withdrawal

Provided by The Methodist Hospital System

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