

Dietary intervention reduces stomach problems for diabetes patients

October 4 2013

Many diabetes patients suffer from symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and lack of appetite. A doctoral thesis from the Sahlgrenska Academy shows that a diet consisting of foods that fall apart easily, for example boiled potatoes and fish gratin, can help alleviate the condition.

About 35 per cent of all diabetes [patients](#) suffer from gastroparesis, which is a medical condition where the stomach is partly paralysed. As a result of the paralysis, food remains in the stomach for a longer time than normal.

Researchers at the Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, have now shown that dietary modifications can reduce the patients' symptoms.

In the study, which involved 56 [diabetes patients](#) with gastroparesis, the subjects who were put on a small particle diet (smaller than 2 mm in diameter) experienced significantly less severe [gastrointestinal symptoms](#) than those who ate a conventional [diabetes diet](#), which tends to focus on large particle foods.

Small particle foods can be defined as food items that fall apart like a boiled potato when mashed with a fork. Examples include boiled, baked and mashed potatoes, fish gratin, meat loaf and thin soups.

Patients who were put on this type of diet for at least 20 weeks experienced considerably fewer gastrointestinal symptoms such as

vomiting, nausea, regurgitation, inability to finish a meal, bloating and lack of appetite.

'Eating and the resulting symptoms can be very anxiety producing for gastroparesis patients. The subjects who were put on a small-particle diet experienced reduced anxiety levels,' says Eva Olausson, who is presenting the study as part of her doctoral thesis at the Sahlgrenska Academy.

The study shows that particle size is directly correlated with the process of gastric emptying: the patients who were put on the small particle diet showed the same rates of gastric emptying as the healthy control group.

They also displayed more normal blood sugar responses than those found for large particle meals.

'A small particle diet probably leads to fewer hypoglycemic events, and the events that do occur become easier to manage. This is of tremendous value to the patients,' says Olausson.

Olausson's thesis also shows that a large particle meal can be used to identify patients with gastroparesis, allowing for faster initiation of treatment.

The scientists have also developed a new method to diagnose gastroparesis, where patients swallow special markers that can be easily followed through the gastrointestinal system by fluoroscopy.

'These two methods are easily accessible and could help reduce the number of unknown gastroparesis cases, which in turn could help reduce the costs to both patients and society in the form of medical treatments and sick-listings,' says Olausson.

Provided by University of Gothenburg

Citation: Dietary intervention reduces stomach problems for diabetes patients (2013, October 4)
retrieved 23 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-10-dietary-intervention-stomach-problems-diabetes.html>

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