

Vitamins may ease diabetes symptoms, study finds

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Dr. Vivian Fonseca, Tulane University School of Medicine, researched paths to ease symptoms of diabetic neuropathy. Credit: Paula Burch-Celentano

(Medical Xpress)—Vitamin therapy is a promising avenue to improving symptoms of pain, tingling and numbness in hands and feet typical of diabetic neuropathy, a study by Tulane University researchers concluded.

The six-month study involved 200 type 2 diabetes patients. Some patients were given Metanx, a vitamin-rich prescription medical food developed by PamLab, a Covington, Louisiana-based company, while others received a placebo.

"Within about two to three months patients taking Metanx started doing significantly better than those taking the placebo," says study leader Dr. Vivian Fonseca, Tullis-Tulane Alumni Chair in Diabetes and past president of science and medicine for the [American Diabetes Association](#).

"Neuropathy basically means abnormalities of the nerves," says Fonseca. "In diabetes the classic case is peripheral neuropathy, affecting the ends of nerves in the hands and feet."

Approximately 50 to 60 percent of [diabetes patients](#) experience symptoms of peripheral neuropathy and the condition can worsen if the disease is not managed.

"The major causes of neuropathy are diabetes; in the past, leprosy; some infections; and vitamin deficiency," says Fonseca.

Several years ago Fonseca came across reports that high doses of vitamins may ease neuropathy symptoms. "I also found reports in the literature of Metanx, which contains high doses of [B vitamins](#), helping people with neuropathy," he says.

The claims were not supported by clinical studies, however.

"I suggested to PamLab that we should do a [randomized controlled trial](#) and they agreed to fund a multi-center trial at Tulane and five other sites," says Fonseca. "We analyzed the study data and found that patients had improvement in some parameters tested and those with subtle vitamin deficiencies did the best. That tells me that [vitamin deficiency](#) may have been contributing to a worsening of that patient's neuropathy and we corrected that."

More information:

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23218892

Provided by Tulane University

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