Dirt Angel

Selenium, found in soil, is a crucial antioxidant for strong immunity

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Could topsoil really hold a key to immune improvement, protection from cancer and slowed disease progression? Selenium, found in soil, is a trace mineral and antioxidant crucial for immune competence. And pilot studies done by Marianna Baum, PhD, of the University of Miami School of Medicine have found a strong link between low levels of selenium and worsening HIV disease. “The greater the selenium deficiency in a patient, the more severe the disease progression,” Baum says. PWAs often have selenium deficiencies in middle, and possibly earlier, stages of infection.

Charles Steinberg, MD, of Boulder, Colorado is an HIV specialist and founder of the AIDS, Medicine & Miracles conference. He says, “The research is convincing. I put all my patients on selenium with a broad spectrum of other antioxidants, including vitamins C and E and carotenoids.” Steinberg urges patients to take selenium for the same reasons they take antiretrovirals -- to slow disease progression and protect the body in the long run -- and not because they’ll “feel” any improvement. “You don’t get up in the morning and say, ’Ahh, my CD4 cells feel better today.’ Don’t expect an observable change. Just expect to live longer,” he says.

Although many foods contain selenium -- organ meats, fish, whole grains, garlic, onions, broccoli -- the levels in food vary greatly according to soil content in each region. Researchers suggest taking 400-600 micrograms per day in supplement form to ensure optimal levels. Because of the powerful protection offered by selenium, it can be an essential element for PWAs’ therapy.

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