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Improvement in HDL cholesterol in postmenopausal women supplemented with pumpkin seed oil: pilot study.

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Author information

Abstract

OBJECTIVE: Pumpkin seed oil is rich in phytoestrogens and animal studies suggest that there is some benefit to supplementation in low estrogen conditions. This study is the first to evaluate the benefit of pumpkin seed oil in postmenopausal women.

METHODS: This pilot study was randomized, double-blinded and placebo-controlled. Study participants included 35 women who had undergone natural menopause or had iatrogenically entered the climacteric due to surgery for benign pathology. Wheat germ oil (placebo; n = 14) and pumpkin seed oil (n = 21) were administered to eligible participants over a 12-week period at a dose of 2 g per day. Serum lipids, fasting plasma glucose and blood pressure were measured and an 18-point questionnaire regarding menopausal symptoms was administered; the atherogenic index was also calculated. Differences between groups, as well as before and after the period of supplementation, were evaluated with Student's t-test, Wilcoxon matched-pair signed-ranked test and Mann-Whitney test, as appropriate (Stata version 10.1).

RESULTS: Women receiving pumpkin seed oil showed a significant increase in high density lipoprotein cholesterol concentrations (0.92 ± 0.23 mmol/l vs. 1.07 ± 0.27 mmol/l; $p = 0.029$) and decrease in diastolic blood pressure (81.1 ± 7.94 mmHg vs. 75.67 ± 11.93 mmHg; $p < 0.046$). There was also a significant improvement in the menopausal symptom scores (18.1 ± 9.0 vs. 13.2 ± 6.7 ; $p < 0.030$), with a decrease in severity of hot flushes, less headaches and less joint pains being the main contributors. Women in the group receiving wheat germ oil reported being more depressed and having more unloved feeling.

CONCLUSION: This pilot study showed pumpkin seed oil had some benefits for postmenopausal women and provided strong evidence to support further studies.

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