Air Pollutants Tied to Headache Severity

BY SHERRY BOSCHERT
FROM THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN HEADACHE SOCIETY

LOS ANGELES – Increases in five air pollutants each were linked with increased frequency, severity, or medical consultation rates for headache or migraine in a review of 11 studies from three continents. The increased risk for headaches is not sufficient to recommend lifestyle changes for individuals on days of high air pollution solely because of the headache risk, but the impact on public health could be large because headache and migraine are prevalent and air pollution is common, Dr. Luzma Cardona said at the meeting.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sets air quality standards for six “criteria” pollutants – carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter, and sulfur dioxide each were associated with increases in the frequency, severity, or medical consultation rates for headache or migraine.

Major Finding: Increases in the outdoor environmental pollutants carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter, and sulfur dioxide each were associated with increases in the frequency, severity, or medical consultation rates for headache or migraine.

Data Source: Review of 11 studies of air pollution and headache conducted in North and South America and Europe between 1988 and 2009.

Disclosures: Dr. Cardona said that he and his coauthors have no relevant conflicts of interest.

The finding’s implications are unclear, but vitamin D supplementation might help improve headaches and overall health, Dr. O’Brien said. Studies in adults have linked low vitamin D levels with various chronic medical problems such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer, autoimmune disease, chronic pain, and osteoporosis. Dr. O’Brien did not list any disclosures and did not respond to attempts to contact her.

Lack of Vitamin D, Ped Headache Linked

BY SHERRY BOSCHERT
FROM THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN HEADACHE SOCIETY

LOS ANGELES – Vitamin D deficiency was detected in 37% of 497 children and adolescents presenting to a tertiary care center for recurrent headache that required preventive treatment. Vitamin D insufficiency was found in 87%.

The results of these studies are consistent with the finding that nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and other medications are effective in treating headache in children. The results also support the use of vitamin D supplementation for children who have recurrent headache.

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