Iron Deficiency Anemia Associated With Hearing Loss, Study Says

By Ana-Marija Dolaskie — January 2, 2017

An untreated iron deficiency could lead to various health problems, one being Iron Deficiency Anemia (IDA). Now, researchers have discovered IDA itself could be linked to another potential problem — hearing loss.

A team of Pennsylvania State University scientists studied the association between IDA and sensorineural hearing loss (SNHL) - a type of deafness or hearing loss in both the neural and inner parts of the ear. It is reported in about 90 percent of all hearing loss cases. In a retrospective cohort study of more than 300,000 young to elderly adults with IDA, their analysis confirmed increased odds of SNHL and hearing loss.

Another affected part could be the vestibulocochlear nerve, which is responsible for both hearing and balance, and bringing information from the inner ear to the brain.

Approximately 15 percent of adults — mostly white males — reported difficulty with hearing, as early as in 2014. Hearing loss increases with each decade of life, but other risk factors for earlier onset include diabetes, hypertension, and tobacco use.

Further research on both medical issues is needed, though researchers speculate that because IDA is an easily preventable condition, early detection and effective treatment of IDA could improve hearing loss outcomes.

Getting Enough Iron In Your Diet

Iron Deficiency Anemia is a common condition in which blood lacks adequate healthy red blood cells. Without sufficient iron, our bodies can't produce enough substance in red blood cells which
are responsible for carrying oxygen (hemoglobin). IDA could lead to fatigue and shortness of breath.

You can prevent iron deficiency by including healthy amounts of iron in your daily diet. Foods rich in iron include red meat, pork, poultry, seafood, beans, leafy vegetables, dried fruits, some cereals, bread, and pasta. In fact, it's difficult to manage not to get iron in your food intake, unless you are a vegan who also is not eating carbohydrates.

And if you're against carbs, you wouldn't benefit from the following, either: Some beer fans [4] have been quick to point out that a pint of Guinness, a popular stout among beer drinkers, contains as much as 3 percent of the daily iron recommended intake. Traces of iron found in beer are not a stretch, but drinking 33 pints of beer to meet your iron intake levels certainly is. Will it help with your hearing? Probably not, but it sure sounds good.

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