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Soy may improve quality of life during menopause

07-06-2005



When given in adequate doses to postmenopausal women, soy that contains isoflavone improves menopausal symptoms and related quality of life, according to new research results.

"This is important because a lot of women are looking for a natural alternative to estrogen replacement therapy and our results suggest that soy is an option," Dr. Kendall Dupree said.

Dupree, from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, discussed the results of the study during a briefing with reporters on Sunday in San Diego at ENDO 2005, the Endocrine Society's 87th annual meeting.

Studies on the benefits of soy for relieving menopausal symptoms have produced mixed results. In the current study, Dupree's group used a standardized soy product, sold online as Revival, which contains 160 milligrams of total isoflavones, soy-derived antioxidants.

"We performed an independent analysis on the product," Dupree said, and then randomly assigned 43 postmenopausal women to the soy product or placebo daily for three months. The average age of the women was 55 years and they had been off hormone replacement therapy for at least six months prior to entering the study.

All of the women completed a menopause-specific quality-of-life questionnaire at the beginning of the study and again after 6 weeks and 3 months.

Compared with placebo therapy, soy therapy led to a 40-percent reduction in psychosocial complaints involving mood and depression, a 36-percent reduction in hot flashes and night sweats, as well as and a 30-percent reduction in other physical symptoms, primarily low energy, Dupree reported.

"At this point, we are pretty happy about the results and think that soy, in adequate doses, may show some improvement in quality of life in women who have postmenopausal complaints," she said.