

EXPRESS Newsline



SKYWATCH

FORECAST: Clear sky. Max and min 35 and 19 degrees C

TEMPERATURE: MAXIMUM 35.9 degrees C; 5 degrees C above normal, and MINIMUM 20 degrees C; 5 degrees C above normal

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NEWSLINE ANCHOR

Natural diet of antioxidants as good as Hormone Replacement Therapy for women in their post menopause stage, says study

AIIMS research finds fountain of youth in the humble tomato

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NEW DELHI, MARCH 19

EARLY this month, researchers at the National Institute of Health, US, called off a trial of women taking hormone replacement therapy (HRT) after finding out that the pills not only failed to improve their health but may have slightly raised the risk of strokes.

A study at AIIMS has now suggested that instead of getting into the debate about the risk and benefits of HRT, going the natural way is equally beneficial.

The study conducted by the gynaecology department at AIIMS has concluded that antioxidants (lycopene, ex-

tracted from raw tomatoes) have all the benefits of HRT. Both reduced the cholesterol level and the oxidative stress levels in the body. "While the cholesterol levels are directly related to cardiac disease, oxidative stress or presence of free radicals in the body has been directly related to diseases like hypertension, cardiac diseases and cancers," said Dr Suneeta Mittal, HOD of Gynaecology at AIIMS.

Women experience post menopausal changes such as mood swings, poor memory, dryness of skin, joint pains and backaches. They are also at a higher risk of cardio-vascular diseases and osteoporosis.

HRT was started in 1960s when women were given female hormones



IS HRT OUT?

Experts say hormone therapy can be used in symptomatic cases but for not exceeding a year. Women who used to pop in a hormone as a supplement every day will have to stop. "HRT can be used as a short-term therapy for symptoms after menopause but not as a prophylactic without consulting a doctor," says Dr Sunita Mittal, HOD of Gynaecology at AIIMS.

estrogen and progesterone for good health. In the early 1970s, 50 per cent of the women in US in the menopausal age started taking HRT to "look young forever".

Anti-oxidants are found in carrots, tomatoes, tea, oilseeds, nuts, legumes and other foods rich in vitamin E and C. The two vitamins can also be taken as supplements.

The AIIMS study conducted from 2001 to 2003 studied women in the age group of 40-60 who had had menopause for at least a year. Half were given HRT and the others lycopene and the effects were compared.

The results showed that there was an overall reduction of cholesterol of 27.28 per cent in women using HRT and about 25 per cent when anti-oxidants were given. While there was an increase of 45 per cent in the good cholesterol (HDL) through HRT, lycopene was slightly less effective (27 per cent). LDL or bad cholesterol decreased by 19 per cent in HRT and about 17 per cent in lycopene.

The reduction in oxidative stress markers, which is measured by reduc-

tion of MDA (Malondialdehyde) levels, was found to be 14 per cent less in HRT and 12 per cent in lycopene. The level of GHS (Glutathione), another oxidative stress marker, increased by about 11 per cent in HRT and nearly 22 per cent in lycopene.

Using HRT, an increased risk of breast cancer and endometrium cancer was noticed in the 1970s. In July 2002, women taking estrogen and progesterone were told to stop use because of the risk of heart-attacks, strokes and cancer.

"Rather than debate if HRT has more risk than benefits, it is better to add more anti-oxidants in your diet and also take it in drug form under the supervision of doctors," said Dr Mittal.