BLOOD PRESSURE BREAKTHROUGH

Super cream just as good as taking pills

By Sarah Westcott

A CREAM rubbed into the skin could help millions suffering from high blood pressure.

The body lotion boosts the level of magnesium in the blood, British scientists have discovered.

A diet low in the essential mineral is known to increase the risk of hypertension or high blood pressure – a potentially life-threatening condition.

The breakthrough was hailed last night as a viable alternative to taking magnesium pills.

Lindsey Kass, of the University of Hertfordshire, said: “Many people do not like taking pills or have difficulty swallowing them.

“Yet a cream could be used easily on a daily basis – for example by rubbing it into the skin after showering. Low magnesium intake has been shown to cause many health problems, including high blood pressure and cardiovascular issues, so these creams could potentially be a good way to contribute to the increase in magnesium levels and therefore help in reducing the associated health problems.”

High blood pressure kills about 10 million people worldwide every year and is the leading risk factor for stroke and heart disease.

In the UK a third of adults suffer from the condition, which can lead to heart attacks, stroke, heart failure and dementia.

The magnesium cream was found to significantly boost levels of the mineral in the blood, helping to regulate blood flow around the body.

The study, published in the journal PLOS One, is the first to examine the effects on human beings rather than animals.

Ms Kass worked alongside Andrea Rosanoff of the Centre for Magnesium Education and Research in Hawaii.

They studied a group of healthy adults who were randomly assigned into magnesium cream or placebo groups, then instructed to apply two 5ml spoonfuls of cream a day for two weeks.

After 12-14 days urine and blood samples were collected and compared with the original findings.

After the magnesium cream intervention, researchers found a clinically relevant increase in magnesium levels in the blood not seen in the placebo group.

Exercise is known to deplete magnesium levels but for non-athletes in the group there was a statistically significant rise in magnesium in the blood. High blood pressure puts extra strain on blood vessels, the heart and other vital organs such as the brain, kidneys and eyes.

Unchecked it can lead to arterial disease, aneurysms, kidney disease and vascular dementia.

Blood pressure is recorded with two numbers. Systolic pressure (the higher number) is influenced by the force with which your heart pumps blood around your body. Diastolic pressure (the lower number) is determined by resistance to the blood flow in the blood vessels.

The ideal is between 90/60mmHg and 120/80mmHg while 140/90mmHg or above is considered high. All adults over 40 are advised to have a blood pressure check at least every five years.

Balanced

The NHS recommends sufferers slash salt intake, cut down on alcohol and caffeine, quit smoking, exercise and lose weight.

Responding to the research, Professor Jeremy Pearson, Associate
Medical Director at the British Heart Foundation, said: “Getting enough magnesium is essential as part of a balanced diet.

“Our bodies use it to turn the food we eat into energy and it may help to lower blood pressure, which can reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke.

“This small study suggests that creams might be another option for people with low levels of magnesium, but oral supplements are more familiar, simpler to take and more effective. If you are concerned about your magnesium levels then speak to your GP”