

## Chinese red yeast rice extract reduces heart attacks

A partly purified extract of Chinese red yeast rice has been found to cut down repeat heart attack risk by 45 percent, cardiovascular mortality by 33 percent and cancer mortality by 66 percent.

These are the findings of a randomised study involving 5,000 patients, aged between 8-70 years, conducted over a five-year period in 60 hospitals in China.

'It's very exciting because this is a natural product and had very few adverse side effects including no abnormal blood changes,' said David M. Capuzzi of Jefferson's Myrna Brind Centre of Integrative Medicine and the study's co-author.

'People in the Far East have been taking Chinese red yeast rice (XZK) as food for thousands of years, but no one has ever studied it clinically in a double-blind manner with a purified product against a placebo group until now and we are pleased with the results,' he said.

The study looked at patients who had suffered a heart attack in the previous year. Participants were given two 300-milligram XZK capsules or a placebo and tracked over a five-year period. The XZK capsules contained a combination of lovastatin, lovastatin hydroxyl acid, ergosterol and other components.

'I think it is surprising that a natural product like XZK would have this great an effect,' said Capuzzi.

'If further testing and study prove true, my hope is that XZK becomes an important therapeutic agent to treat cardiovascular disorders and in the prevention of disease whether someone has had a heart attack or not.

The findings of Capuzzi and Zonliang Lu, of the Fuwai Hospital of Chinese Academy of Medical Science, will appear in the June 15 issue of American Journal of Cardiology.

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