

Selenium for Graves Orbitopathy?

A small randomized trial suggests that selenium is safe and effective.

A small body of research has suggested that selenium and pentoxifylline have roles in treating patients with Graves orbitopathy (also known as ophthalmopathy) through antioxidant and anti-inflammatory mechanisms, respectively. In this multicenter European study, researchers randomized 159 patients with mild Graves orbitopathy to selenium, pentoxifylline, or placebo for 6 months.

Compared with placebo recipients, selenium-treated patients reported significantly better Graves orbitopathy–related quality of life, and several ophthalmologic endpoints also were judged to be better (according to examinations performed by ophthalmologists blinded to treatment group). Benefits of selenium persisted at 12 months, and no adverse effects were noted. Pentoxifylline was ineffective.

Comment: Patients with severe orbitopathy generally are treated with corticosteroids. In contrast, mild orbitopathy is often left untreated, even though it can be quite bothersome. This study suggests that selenium supplementation is a safe and effective intervention for patients with mild disease.

— [Allan S. Brett, MD](#)

Published in [Journal Watch General Medicine](#) May 19, 2011