
No Significant Benefits of Nordic Diet on Cardiovascular Events



According to a study led from Sweden's Karolinska Institutet and being published in the Journal of Internal Medicine, there is no evidence of the beneficial effects of a Nordic diet on cardiovascular health.

It has long been known that dietary factors can have an important impact on cardiovascular health. Studies have previously shown the beneficial effects of a Nordic diet, which mainly comprises of whole grain bread and oatmeal, fruit (apples/pears), vegetables (root vegetables and cabbage) and fish on short term markers for cardiovascular health such as blood pressure and weight loss. Studies have also shown beneficial effects of the individual components of the Nordic diet on cardiovascular events. However, to date, no study proves the long-term association of the diet on cardiovascular health.

This particular study was conducted in 43,310 middle-aged Swedish women. The primary goal was to investigate the long-term association of a healthy Nordic diet and the incidence of cardiovascular disease in the general population. The researchers also wanted to determine whether the relationship between the Nordic diet and cardiovascular disease is modified by age, weight, alcohol consumption and smoking.

Participants were asked to respond to questions about their food intake in 1991/1992 and the incidence of cardiovascular disease was recorded over approximately 20 years until the end of 2012. At time of follow-up, approximately 20 percent of women developed cardiovascular disease. In addition, the beneficial effects of the Nordic diet were not evident when evaluating the incidence of concrete, cardiovascular events in the general population. The researchers also found that alcohol intake, weight and age did not have any significant affect.

"The reason for this for this discrepancy could be that previous studies showing effect of a healthy Nordic diet were intervention trials, which means participants had a very high adherence to this particular diet and also were selected, high-risk persons in relation to developing cardiovascular disease, whereas the present study expected a lesser degree of adherence, and looked at a group of overall healthy women", says first author Nina Roswall, PhD, at the Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Karolinska Institutet.

Prof. Elisabete Weiderpass, PhD, who supervised the study points out that the study showed a beneficial effect of the Nordic diet among former smokers. However, she believes that this could be due to the fact that smoking cessation is associated with a healthier lifestyle.

Source: Karolinska Institutet

Image Credit: Prof. Elisabete Weiderpass, Karolinska Institutet.

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