

Switching Protein Sources May Reduce CHD Risk

Data from more than 84 000 women over 26 years suggest that shifting dietary protein sources away from red meat to more poultry, fish, and nuts can reduce an individual's risk of coronary heart disease [1].

Their results are published online August 16, 2010 in *Circulation*. The patients enrolled in the study had no known cancer, diabetes mellitus, angina, myocardial infarction, stroke, or other cardiovascular disease. Their diet was tracked with a standard questionnaire every 4 years. During 26 years of follow-up, 2210 incident nonfatal infarctions and 952 deaths from coronary heart disease were reported.

A multivariable analysis of diet and traditional risk factors, like age and smoking, shows that consumption of red meat and high-fat dairy were significantly associated with an elevated risk of coronary heart disease, whereas higher intakes of poultry, fish, and nuts were significantly associated with lower risk.

A statistical model controlling for total intake of calories, cereal fiber, alcohol, trans-unsaturated fatty acids, and other potential nondietary confounding variables, shows that one serving per day of nuts was associated with a 30% lower risk of coronary disease than one serving per day of red meat. The same one-serving exchange comparison found a 13% lower risk with low-fat dairy, a 19% lower risk with poultry, and a 24% lower risk with fish.

References

1. Bernstein A, Sun Q, Hu F, et al. Major dietary protein sources and risk of coronary heart disease in women. *Circulation* 2010; DOI:10.1161/circulationaha.109.915165. Available at <http://circ.ahajournals.org/>.