

No need to nag: study finds doctors' nutrition advice hits home early

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Hearing dietary advice twice is enough for patients to get the significant benefits of lower cholesterol, according to a new study led by doctors at St. Michael's Hospital and the University of Toronto.

"We're seeing more and more people want to take their health into their own hands," said Dr. David Jenkins, the lead author of the study and director of the hospital's [Risk Factor Modification](#) Centre. Dr. Jenkins is also Canada's Research Chair in [Nutrition and Metabolism](#) at U of T's Department of [Nutritional Sciences](#).

Jenkins and his team measured participant's reduction in LDL or "bad" cholesterol after dietary advice was given at one of two levels of intensity – two times in six months ("routine") or seven times in six months ("intensive").

Both groups were asked to eat a combination of foods with cholesterol lowering properties, known as a dietary portfolio. This included the four portfolio components: soy proteins, viscous or "sticky" fibres, nuts and plant sterols.

They found that regardless of which group participants were assigned to, both groups lowered their LDL cholesterol almost the exact same amount—13.1 per cent for routine and 13.8 per cent for intensive.

Jenkins says the findings are encouraging because it is a "great burden off the medical system if people are equipped to look after themselves.

Doctors can do a better job if there are fewer patients to see."

The goal was to look at the effect of dietary advice in real-world conditions, the authors noted in the paper.

Participant sessions with a dietitian involved a 40 to 60 minute check-in and diet monitoring. Participants were asked to bring in a seven-day diet record which was analyzed by a dietitian who advised ways to improve their diet.

A control group did not receive any dietary advice during the six month period and was placed on a different, although still healthy low-saturated fat diet but with no portfolio components. Their cholesterol was lowered by three per cent.

Provided by St. Michael's Hospital

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