

Fiber protects against cardiovascular disease -- especially in women

April 16 2012

Foods high in fibre provide good protection against cardiovascular disease, and the effect is particularly marked in women. This is shown in a new study from Lund University in Sweden.

The study, which was recently published in the scientific journal [PLOS One](#), involved the study of the [eating habits](#) of over 20 000 residents of the Swedish city of Malmö, with a focus on the risk of cardiovascular disease. The importance of 13 different nutrient variables (aspects of fibre, fats, proteins and carbohydrates) was analysed.

"[Women](#) who ate a diet high in fibre had an almost 25 per cent lower risk of suffering from cardiovascular disease compared with women who ate a low-fibre diet. In men the effect was less pronounced. However, the results confirmed that a high-fibre diet does at least protect men from stroke", says Peter Wallström, a researcher at Lund University and the primary author of the article.

The exact reason for the difference between the sexes is unclear. However, a probable explanation is that women consume fibre from healthier food sources than men do. Women ate a lot of fibre in the form of fruit and vegetables, whereas the most important source of fibre for men was bread.

"The difference in the results for men and women shows that we need to pay more attention to gender when we conduct research on diet", says Peter Wallström.

However, the researchers did not identify any definite links between the other nutrients in the study and cardiovascular disease, for example the proportion of saturated fat or sugar in the diet.

"These results should be interpreted with a certain amount of caution. Almost everyone eats more saturated fat than recommended, including the participants in many other population studies. It is therefore difficult to compare recommended and high fat intake. Other types of study that have been carried out have shown that those who limit their fat and sugar intake are at lower risk of [cardiovascular disease](#)", says Peter Wallström.

Peter Wallström is sceptical of 'extreme' diets and says that the dietary recommendations from the National Food Administration are good, despite having received criticism:

"The National Food Administration's dietary advice, which is based on extensive research, is well balanced. In the short term, most weight-loss diets achieve their aim as long as you follow them. However, we know too little about the long-term effects to be able to recommend more drastic changes to one's diet", says Peter Wallström.

Data for the study has been taken from the Malmö Diet and Cancer population study, which has involved 30 000 Malmö residents since the start of the 1990s. The participants have given blood samples and detailed information about their [diet](#).

More information: Dietary Fiber and Saturated Fat Intake Associations with Cardiovascular Disease Differ by Sex in the Malmö Diet and Cancer Cohort: A Prospective Study, *PLOS One*.

Provided by Lund University

Citation: Fiber protects against cardiovascular disease -- especially in women (2012, April 16)
retrieved 1 May 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-04-fiber-cardiovascular-disease-women.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.