

Mediterranean diet may lower stroke risk, study finds

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Researchers say healthy eating plan appears to cut odds of blood clot

(HealthDay)—A Mediterranean diet may reduce your risk of one type of stroke, new research suggests.

People who most closely followed the Mediterranean [diet](#) were less likely to suffer an ischemic stroke—caused by a blood clot—compared to people with the lowest adherence to the diet, the study found.

A Mediterranean diet includes plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, fish, poultry and olive oil. There is limited consumption of red meat, sweets and saturated fats such as those in meat, butter and full-fat dairy products, according to the researchers.

While the research couldn't prove cause-and-effect, "overall, there is strong evidence, based on this study, that strict adherence to a

Mediterranean diet significantly reduces stroke risk," said Dr. Paul Wright, chair of neurology at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, N.Y.

Wright was not involved in the new study, which was led by Dr. Ayesha Sherzai, a neurologist at Columbia University Medical Center in New York City.

Sherzai's team analyzed data from more than 104,000 teachers in California, averaging 52 years of age, who are taking part in a long-term study. The participants, 90 percent of who were white, were divided into five groups based on how well they followed a Mediterranean diet.

While closely following a Mediterranean diet was associated with a reduced risk of a stroke caused by a blood clot, the healthy eating plan had no effect on a person's odds for a bleeding (hemorrhagic) stroke, according to the study.

According to the researchers, prior research has shown that people who follow a Mediterranean diet have a lower risk of heart disease, mental decline and death, but there is little information about how the diet affects [stroke risk](#).

Wright noted that the study was especially rigorous, since the authors accounted for "other factors that would reduce [stroke](#) risks, such as exercise, total caloric intake, [body mass index](#), smoking and menopausal/hormonal status."

The findings were to be presented Thursday at the American Stroke Association's annual meeting in Nashville. Findings from meetings are generally viewed as preliminary until they've been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: The American Heart Association has more on the [Mediterranean diet](#).

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