

Fish oils do not prevent heart attack or strokes in people with diabetes

August 26 2018



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Fish oil supplements do not prevent heart attacks or strokes in patients with diabetes, according to late breaking results from the ASCEND trial presented today in a Hot Line Session at ESC Congress 2018 and

published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

In observational studies, higher consumption of [fish](#) is associated with lower risks of coronary artery disease and stroke. However, previous randomised trials have not been able to show that taking fish oil supplements containing omega-3 fatty acids reduce the [risk](#) of having [cardiovascular events](#).

The ASCEND trial (A Study of Cardiovascular Events iN Diabetes)² examined whether fish oil supplements reduce the risk of a cardiovascular event in patients with diabetes. Between 2005 and 2011, 15,480 patients with diabetes but no history of cardiovascular disease were randomly assigned to fish oil supplementation (1 g daily) or matching placebo.

The primary efficacy outcome was first serious vascular event, which included non-fatal heart attacks, non-fatal strokes or transient ischaemic attacks (sometimes called "mini-strokes"), or deaths from a cardiovascular cause (but excluding any intracranial haemorrhage; i.e. bleeding in the head or brain³).

During an average of 7.4 years of follow-up, a first serious vascular event occurred in 689 (8.9%) participants allocated fish oil supplements and 712 (9.2%) participants allocated placebo. There was no significant difference between the two groups: rate ratio of 0.97 (95% confidence interval 0.87-1.08, $p=0.55$).

Dr. Louise Bowman, principal investigator, Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford, UK, said: "Our large, long-term randomised trial shows that fish oil supplements do not reduce the risk of cardiovascular events in patients with diabetes. This is a disappointing finding, but it is in line with previous randomised [trials](#) in other types of patient at increased risk of cardiovascular events which

also showed no benefit of fish oil supplements. There is no justification for recommending [fish oil supplements](#) to protect against cardiovascular events."

More information: "ASCEND - A randomized trial of omega-3 fatty acids (fish oil) versus placebo for primary cardiovascular prevention in 15,480 people with diabetes", ESC Congress 2018.

Effects of n-3 Fatty Acid Supplements in Diabetes Mellitus, *New England Journal of Medicine* (2018). DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa1804989

Provided by European Society of Cardiology

Citation: Fish oils do not prevent heart attack or strokes in people with diabetes (2018, August 26) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-08-fish-oils-heart-people-diabetes.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.
