

Following DASH diet can reduce heart failure risk in people under 75

May 10 2019



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A diet proven to have beneficial effects on high blood pressure also may reduce the risk of heart failure in people under age 75, according to a study led by researchers at Wake Forest School of Medicine, part of Wake Forest Baptist Health.

The observational study of more than 4,500 people showed that those individuals under 75 who most closely adhered to the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet had a significantly [lower risk](#) of developing [heart failure](#) than those whose eating habits were least in keeping with the diet.

The research is published in the current online issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

"Only a few prior studies have examined the effects of the DASH diet on the incidence of heart failure, and they have yielded conflicting results," said the study's lead author, Claudia L. Campos, M.D., associate professor of general internal [medicine](#) at Wake Forest School of Medicine. "This research showed that following the DASH diet can reduce the risk of developing heart failure by almost half, which is better than any medicine."

The DASH diet emphasizes the eating of fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains, poultry, fish, and low-fat dairy products while reducing consumption of salt, red meat, sweets and sugar-sweetened beverages. It is similar to the Mediterranean diet but differs in recommending low-fat dairy products and excluding alcoholic beverages.

For the study the researchers reviewed the cardiovascular health records over 13 years of 4,478 men and women of multiple ethnicities from six U.S. sites who were between ages 45 and 84 with no history of cardiovascular disease when they were enrolled in the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis between 2000 and 2002.

The assessment of their dietary habits was based on their responses to a 120-item questionnaire covering the serving size and frequency of consumption of specific foods and beverages. Using this data, the study team divided the participants into five groups, each representing 20 percent of the study population, based on how well (or poorly) their eating habits aligned with the DASH diet.

The risk of heart failure did not vary significantly by DASH compliance for the population as a whole, but it did for participants under 75, with those in the group with the highest DASH compliance group having an incidence rate 40 percent lower than those in the lowest compliance group.

"Heart failure is a frequent cause of hospitalization in [older adults](#) and is associated with substantial health care costs, so identifying modifiable risk factors for heart failure is an important public health goal," Campos said. "This research provides a framework for further exploration of the DASH [diet](#) as an effective element in the primary prevention of [heart](#) failure."

More information: Claudia L. Campos et al, Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension Diet Concordance and Incident Heart Failure: The Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.amepre.2018.11.022](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2018.11.022)

Provided by Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center

Citation: Following DASH diet can reduce heart failure risk in people under 75 (2019, May 10)
retrieved 2 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-05-dash-diet-heart-failure-people.html>

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