

Writing Sample

Type: Research News

Topic: Nutrition, Public Health

Audience: General Consumer

(note: mockup only)

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**Eating more fish protects against heart disease even in diabetics, study finds**

Oct 03, 2012

BOSTON – Women with diabetes who eat fish regularly have a lower risk of developing coronary heart disease (CHD), according to a large study published in the new issue of *Circulation*.

Researchers found that risk of CHD decreased as fish intake increased. In the study, patients who ate fish once per week decreased their risk by 40%, compared to those who ate fish less than once a month. Even one to three fish servings per month could lower a person's risk of heart disease by 30%. Risk reductions were significant even after accounting for other possible influencing factors, such as age, dietary intake, physical activity, family history, hypertension history, vitamin supplementation, and aspirin use.

Over 5 thousand U.S. women enrolled in the Nurses' Health Study with diabetes answered questions about diet, exercise, lifestyle, and medical issues on an annual basis from 1986 to 1996. Researchers at Harvard School of Public Health divided participants into five categories based on how often they ate fish and compared incidence of heart disease across categories of fish consumption.

Previous studies of fish intake in the general population have shown protective effects against heart disease. Omega-3 fatty acids are the main protective nutrient in fish and may improve blood vessel function. Dark meat fish such as mackerel, salmon, sardines, bluefish, or swordfish

contain the highest levels of omega-3s. Canned tuna contains only one third of the same nutrients.

Patients with diabetes are at a higher risk for heart attack and stroke. Intake of omega-3 containing foods could be important for these patients. However, prior research had raised concerns about the action of fish oil on blood sugar levels in these patients.

Researchers acknowledge key limitations of their study due to the source of the data. Known influencers of CHD, including glycemic control, diabetes severity, and gender, were absent. However, adjusting data to account for duration of disease, use of insulin, and hypoglycemic medications yielded similar results

The American Heart Association recommends eating at least two servings (3.5 oz cooked) of fish per week. Bake or grill fish and choose low-sodium, low-fat seasonings (spices, herbs, lemon juice) for a healthy meal. Some fish types may contain higher levels of mercury than others. Pregnant women especially should avoid eating high mercury-containing fish. Individuals eating fish on a regular basis should weigh their risks and benefits of each fish type based on omega-3 and mercury content. When eaten responsibly, people with diabetes, in particular, may achieve heart health benefits from fish intake.