

Omega-3 Reduces Risk of Heart Failure in Women

Increased intakes of fatty fish, and the omega-3s they contain, may reduce a woman's risk of heart failure by about 25 per cent, according to new findings from the US and Sweden.

The benefits appear linked to the omega-3 content of the fish, report researchers in the European Journal of Clinical Nutrition. The highest intake of marine omega-3 fatty acids linked to a reduction in the risk of heart failure of 25 per cent.

The heart health benefits of consuming oily fish, and the omega-3 fatty acids they contain, are well-documented, being first reported in the early 1970s by Jorn Dyerberg and his co-workers in The Lancet and The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. To date, the polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) have been linked to improvements in blood lipid levels, a reduced tendency of thrombosis, blood pressure and heart rate improvements, and improved vascular function.

The new study adds to previous data in men from the same researchers and published in the European Heart Journal (Vol. 30, pp. 1495-1500). That study, said to be one of the largest studies to investigate the association between fatty fish and omega-3 intake, and heart failure, found that omega-3 fatty acids may reduce the risk of heart failure by 33 per cent.

The researchers analysed data from 36,234 women participating in the Swedish Mammography Cohort. Dietary intakes for the women, aged between 48 and 83 was obtained using 96-item food-frequency questionnaires.

Over the course of 18 years of study, 651 cases of heart failure were documented. Eating one serving of fatty fish per week was associated with a 14 per cent reduction in the risk of heart failure, compared with women who did not eat any fatty fish. Furthermore, eating two servings of fatty fish per week was associated with a 30 per cent reduction.

The association for omega-3 fatty acids was stronger, said the researchers, with the highest intakes of omega-3 associated with a 25 per cent reduction in risk.

"Moderate consumption of fatty fish (1–2 servings per week) and marine omega-3 fatty acids were associated with a lower rate of first heart failure hospitalization or death in this population," concluded the researchers.

Being an observation study, the data does not prove causality, however, and additional studies are needed to support the apparent link. .

Source: European Journal of Clinical Nutrition
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"Fatty fish, marine omega-3 fatty acids and incidence of heart failure"
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Red Yeast Rice May be More Effective than Statin Drugs

Dietary supplements of red yeast rice may lower LDL cholesterol levels by 21 per cent, and offer a blood lipid lowering alternative for people intolerant to statins, says a new study.

Reductions in total cholesterol levels of 15 per cent were reported, and 92 per cent of participants tolerated the dietary supplement, according to findings published in the American Journal of Cardiology.

“The present report has provided real-world evidence of LDL cholesterol reduction with nonselected, over-the-counter red yeast rice therapy in an outpatient population intolerant to other lipid medications,” wrote the researchers from the University of Tennessee, Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh, and the University of Connecticut.

“Producing red yeast rice under controlled conditions could provide a widely available and safe dietary supplement for lowering cholesterol,” they added.

Red yeast rice is the product of yeast grown on rice. It is a dietary staple in some Asian countries, and reportedly contains several compounds that inhibit cholesterol production.

The new study supports similar findings for the ingredient, with American researchers reporting that the red yeast rice could indeed help reduce blood lipid levels in people intolerant to statins (Annals of Internal Medicine, Vol. 150, pp. 830-839).

Led by Dr Paul Thompson from the University of Connecticut, the researchers collected data on 25 people who received red yeast rice supplements for at least four weeks, based on patient charts. All the patients were intolerant to statins, and noted adverse effects including muscle pain and gastrointestinal intolerance.

The data from the patients showed that red yeast rice was associated with a 15 and 21 per cent reduction in total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol levels, respectively.

“This retrospective observational study of a clinical population demonstrated significant LDL cholesterol reductions with red yeast rice therapy in a population highly intolerant to daily statin use,” wrote Thompson and his co-workers.

The authors also noted the key limitations of their study, including that it was “small, unblinded, uncontrolled, and retrospective”. They also note that patients selected their own red yeast rice preparation.

Source: The American Journal of Cardiology

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“Lipid-Lowering Efficacy of Red Yeast Rice in a Population Intolerant to Statins”

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