

Study Links Foods High in Protein to Better Cardiovascular Health

High protein consumption may be better for your health than you might first imagine. In fact, a team of researchers from the University of East Anglia (UEA) and London's King College has discovered that consuming a diet filled meat and plant-based amino acids offer positive cardiovascular health benefits.

Eating foods high in seven specific amino acids is just as good as getting exercise and smoking cessation in terms of heart health improvements.

The team's research appeared in the July issue of *The Journal of Nutrition*. With the role protein consumption plays on cardiovascular health already established, the purpose of this new study taken on by researchers from UEA was to find out specifically what amino acids affected cardiovascular health and in what way.

High protein consumption and its role in improving cardiovascular health has been a subject of recent interest, especially in light of its relation to hypertension reduction. There has been an inverse association identified between increasing the number of amino acids from plant- and animal-based proteins one eats and a reduction in systolic and diastolic blood pressure. There is also a link between the high protein consumption and a reduction in arterial stiffness.

The Study

Participants in the study included 2,000 healthy females with normal Body Mass Indexes (BMIs). Researchers examined the

effects of seven different amino acids on the women's cardiovascular health. The study's data, used for examining the environmental and genetic causes of age-related disorders, comes from TwinsUK: a registry in the United Kingdom containing some 12,000 twins.

Researchers examined the dietary habits of all of the participants and made comparisons with clinical measurements of blood vessel stiffness, thickness, and blood pressure. The conclusion: Significant evidence exists suggesting that women who have a dietary intake high in the seven amino acids studied have lower levels of both arterial stiffness and blood pressure.

Interestingly, the extent of the association are parallel those positive cardiovascular benefits derived from a reduction in salt intake, an increase in physical activity, and the cessation of bad habits like smoking and alcohol consumption. More importantly, the source of the protein relates to the type of cardiovascular benefit each woman received. Participants consuming plant-based amino acids saw a reduction in blood pressure. When consuming animal-based proteins, a reduction in arterial stiffness results.

Heading up the research team is Dr. Amy Jennings, from the UEA's Norwich Medical School and Department of Nutrition. Jennings asserts the study demonstrates how certain amino acids can have a "protective effect" on one's cardiovascular health. She also suggests an increase in one's dietary intake of foods like spinach, broccoli, lentils, beans, dairy, fish, and meats may be a method for reducing cardiovascular disease-related risks.

The seven amino acids examined during the study include tyrosine, leucine, histidine, glycine, glutamic acid, cysteine, and arginine. Tyrosine, leucine, and glutamic acid are amino acids found in animal-based food sources and increases in the latter three amino acids were associated with

a reduction in arterial stiffness.

High blood pressure is a condition that puts an individual at risk for cardiovascular disease, heart attacks, and strokes. Reducing issues with hypertension is necessary in order to reduce mortality risks, and experts suggest that with just a few dietary changes, like eating foods high in specific amino acids, can help, not just treat hypertension, but prevent it as well.

The amount one should consume to get the correct amount of amino acids for good cardiovascular health is equal to a 500 milliliter glass of skimmed milk, a 100 gram salmon fillet, or a 75 gram portion of steak.

Another participant in the study, Professor Tim Spector, from the Department of Twin Research and Genetic Epidemiology at King's College in London, calls the discovery "an exciting finding." He also asserts that more research is necessary, with the goal of discovering whether the mechanism is through gut microbes or direct.

Don Colbert, M.D. *has been board-certified in Family Practice for over 25 years and practices Anti-aging and Integrative medicine. He is a New York Times Bestselling author of books such as The Bible Cure Series, What Would Jesus Eat, Deadly Emotions, What You Don't Know May be Killing You, and many more with over 10 million books sold. He is the Medical Director of the Divine Health Wellness Center in Orlando, Florida where he has treated over 50,000 patients.*

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