Animal vs. Plant Fats for Heart Health (NEW STUDY) Transcript

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Study Overview and Cohort Details

Here's a new study looking at animal-based and plant- based fats and how they can impact the risk of cardiovascular and overall mortality. This analysis from the NIH AARP cohort included over 400,000 American adults who were followed for up to 24 years.

They found that those with the highest plant fat intake had a 9% lower risk overall of mortality, which is the risks of dying during the study compared to those of the lowest intakes.

They also had a 14% lower risk of dying due to cardiovascular disease, specifically.

Plant Fats Linked to Lower Mortality Risk

And individually, higher intakes of fat from grains, nuts, and vegetable oils were associated with reductions in risk. Those with the highest animal fat intake, however, had 16% higher risk for overall mortality and 14 percent higher of cardiovascular mortality, with fat in dairy and eggs increasing the risk in both outcomes and red meat increasing risk overall.

They unfortunately didn't provide data on fat from different types of dairy products which may have varying effects on our health. They also looked at fish fat which appeared to lower the risk of both outcomes.

Animal Fats Linked to Higher Mortality Risk

And these results were after adjusting for a number of variables including age, BMI, smoking status, physical activity, education and intakes of protein, carbs, fiber, cholesterol and more.

And the dietary adjustments are particularly notable. By adjusting for fiber and trying to isolate the impact of fat, they're actually removing some of the benefit of these plant foods.

So the true benefit, of consuming nuts for example, may be larger than what we're seeing in this study that's specifically trying hone in on the fat content.

I'll also note that they performed a number of additional analyses looking at specific subgroups, adjusting for total calorie intake, using different statistical methods and so on, and the results were fairly similar across the board with few exceptions.

And lastly, they did some substitution analyses where they modeled the swap of a couple specific sources of fat to see how that may impact our health.

Fish Fat and Adjusted Analyses

They found that replacing just 5% of calories from animal fat with plant fat could lower the risk of overall mortality by 4% and cardiovascular disease mortality 5%. And replacing fat from red meat, dairy, or eggs with plant fats, especially from grains or vegetable oils, was associated with a lower risk of both outcomes.

And, replacing white meat fat with plants fats was also beneficial for cardiovascular disease mortality.

Fat Substitution Findings and Takeaway

But, the swap of fish fat for plant fat was generally more neutral with the exception of fat grains which was

beneficial over the fish fats. So this is really just more of what we already know.

High animal fat intake, especially when rich in saturated fats, can increase the risk of total and cardiovascular disease mortality, whereas unsaturated plant fats are protective.