



Dietary Patterns Linked to Type 2 Diabetes Risk

Avoiding meats and fatty foods and eating lots of salads and cooked vegetables appears to reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, according to study findings

Dr. Allison Hodge, of the University of Melbourne, Australia, and colleagues examined the association between dietary patterns and type 2 diabetes in a 4-year study of 36,787 adults in the Melbourne Collaborative Cohort who provided dietary information. During follow-up, 365 new cases of type 2 diabetes were diagnosed.

The researchers defined four eating patterns, based on the predominance of 123 foods and beverages in the diet, which included: olive oil, salad, vegetables, legumes and avoidance of sweet bakery items, margarine and tea (Mediterranean); a variety of salads and vegetables (Salad and Vegetable); meats and fatty fried foods (Meat); and many different fruits (Fruit).

The Mediterranean pattern was associated with country of birth but not with diabetes, according to the authors. There was an inverse association observed between the Salad and Vegetable pattern and diabetes. The Meat pattern was positively associated with diabetes. No association was observed between the Fruit pattern and diabetes risk.

"Our results suggest that avoiding an eating pattern including meat and fatty foods, and favoring a pattern high in salad and cooked vegetables could reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes," Hodge said in an interview.

"What is important is that the focus is on eating patterns rather than single foods," she explained. "It may be that these eating patterns contribute to diabetes risk through an impact on body weight; overweight and obesity are still the most important risk factors for type 2 diabetes."

"One interesting thing about our results is that unlike most researchers who have identified eating patterns using factor analysis, we do not find a 'healthy' and an 'unhealthy' pattern," Hodge said. This may be related to the influence of Greek and Italian migrants in Australia, resulting in a wider variety of foods in the diets of the study subjects.

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DID YOU KNOW:

Cocoa extract 'targets big four': Epicatechin, a compound found in cocoa, could target four of the major health problems, it has been claimed today. New research argues that the nutrient helps to target the risk of stroke, heart failure, cancer and diabetes. Norman Hollenberg, professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, studied the Kuna people in Panama, who drink up to 40 cups of cocoa a week. He found that they have a ten per cent reduction in the risk of the 'big four'. "If these observations predict the future, then we can say without blushing that they are among the most important observations in the history of medicine," Professor Hollenberg said in the journal Chemistry & Industry. "We all agree that penicillin and anaesthesia are enormously important. But epicatechin could potentially get rid of four of the five most common diseases in the western world. How important does that make epicatechin? I would say very important." Epicatechin is also found in some fruits and vegetables, teas, wine and chocolate.

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