

Consuming a healthy diet is associated with lower cardiovascular disease risk in all regions of the world.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a leading cause of death in developed and developing countries. An unhealthy diet is a leading driver and one of the major modifiable risk factors for the prevention of CVD. Thus, dietary approaches are key to prevention and management. The role of diet and their influence on CVD risk factors have been extensively reviewed and guidelines such as the European guidelines for the management of dyslipidaemias state that dietary modifications should form the basis for CVD prevention [1].

New evidence on the role of diet and total death and CVD in diverse regions of the world.

Recent evidence based on data from the Prospective Urban Rural Epidemiology (PURE) study demonstrates robust and consistent associations between higher intakes of protective healthy foods and a lower risk of total mortality and CVD in various regions of the world [2].

The PURE study includes a cohort of more than 147,000 individuals from the general population from 21 low-, middle-, and high-income countries. Based on previous observations of dietary habits and mortality data, a healthy diet score was developed based on six foods which are associated with lower mortality risk. These six foods are fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes, fish, and (mostly whole fat) dairy. For each diet component, one point was given for intakes above the median, resulting in a final diet score ranging from zero (worst) to six (best).

During a median follow-up of ~9 years, a score of ≥ 5 points was significantly associated with a lower risk of total mortality (-30%), CVD (-18%), myocardial infarction (-14%) and stroke (-19%) compared with a diet score of ≤ 1 points [2]. These findings were further validated in external cohorts that also included patients with known CVD.

The PURE healthy eating pattern includes fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts fish and dairy foods.

Based on these findings, the PURE healthy diet score recommends daily servings of fruit and vegetables combined and weekly servings of legumes, nuts, fish, and dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese) as depicted below [taken from Ref 2].



As shown, a healthy diet comprised of higher amounts of fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes, fish, and whole-fat dairy is associated with lower CVD and mortality globally. The findings stress the importance of these health-protecting foods and are consistent with most globally available dietary guidelines [3]. An improvement of diet by already 20% can result in 8% lower risk of death and 6% lower risk of major CVD events. This shows the power of protective foods to help address the burden of diet-related chronic diseases such as CVD [3].

To learn more about healthy dietary patterns and healthy foods visit the educational tool “Diet at the heart of CVD prevention” hosted under “Apps, tools & resources” at the EAS website.

<https://www.dietattheheart.com/>

References:

1. Mach F et al, ESC/EAS Guidelines for the management of dyslipidaemias: lipid modification to reduce cardiovascular risk. Eur Heart J 2020; 41(1): 11-188
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