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Consumption of omega-3 fatty acids can reduce several heart disease risk factors, including inflammation and platelet aggregation, according to findings in the Journal of Nutrition.

OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS LINKED TO LOWER HEART DISEASE RISK

Recent findings of a Harvard study indicate that increased consumption of omega-3 fatty acids in the diet is associated with lower levels of inflammation and endothelial activation. Dysfunction of the endothelium, which is the inner lining of the blood vessel wall, is an early event in the development of atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries.

Food frequency questionnaires completed in 1986 and 1990 by 727 participants in the Nurses' Health study were evaluated for levels of the omega-3 fatty acids alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA).

Alpha-linolenic acid consumption was found to be inversely associated with several plasma markers of inflammation, while EPA and DHA intake was inversely related to platelet aggregation.

Results of this study indicate that in addition to reducing triglycerides, platelet aggregation and heart arrhythmias, omega-3 fatty acids may also reduce the body's production of hydrogen peroxide, which is involved in the inflammatory process.

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