

Research continues to show that a diet high in fiber may reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer and is beneficial for health.

Fiber and all-cause mortality

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) and cancer are among the leading causes of death in developed countries. Research has shown that a diet higher in fiber may provide health benefits specifically for these two conditions, however little is known about association of dietary fiber with other causes of death. Despite the lack of research it is believed that the health benefits of a diet high in fiber is not just limited to CVD and cancer, but may also provide health benefits through a number of other mechanisms. A recent European cohort study consisting of 452,717 volunteers, between the ages of ~25-70 at recruitment (mean = 50.8 years), provides further data to help learn about what other benefits fiber may have.

The researchers in this study used a food frequency questionnaire and a seven day food record to determine the volunteers' fiber intake (both soluble and insoluble forms of fiber were included). The average follow-up period was 12.7 years, during which 23,582 deaths occurred among the volunteer individuals. Analysis revealed a correlation between increased fiber intake and decreased mortality. For every 10 gram/day increase in fiber there was a decrease in mortality of 10%. When looking at individual causes of death, the 10 g/day increase in fiber was linked to a decrease in death by 10% for circulatory diseases, 39% for digestive diseases, 23% for respiratory disease, and 14% for smoking-related cancers. These associations were consistent across Body Mass Index (BMI) and physical activity, but were stronger for those who were smokers and for those that consumed more than 18 g/day of alcohol.

The results of this study continue to support the data showing that increased fiber intake is associated with a decreased risk of death from CVD and cancer. Additionally it shows that a correlation may also exist between fiber intake and death from digestive and respiratory diseases. This research supports the idea that a diet high in fiber is important for maintenance of overall health.

Chuang S-chun, Norat T, Murphy N, et al. Fiber intake and total and cause-specific mortality in the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition cohort. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2012;96(1):164-74.