

## ASN Publications

### New Reviews in [Advances in Nutrition](#)

#### More Than Half of Young Adults Have One or More Coronary Heart Disease Risk Factors

Young adults typically don't think they need to worry about heart disease. However, according to a review published in *Advances in Nutrition*, "[Coronary Heart Disease Risk Factors in College Students](#)," more than one-half of young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 have at least one coronary heart disease risk factor. Among these factors are poor diet, obesity, lack of exercise, smoking and high blood pressure, all of which greatly increase lifetime heart disease risk. Moreover, nearly one-quarter of young adults already have advanced atherosclerotic lesions, causing blockage and narrowing of the arteries. As a result, coronary heart disease is one of the leading causes of death among young adults.

Among the risk factors for coronary heart disease, obesity has been rising. Over the past 30 years, obesity has more than doubled in children and more than tripled in adolescents. Obesity tends to continue and worsen in young adulthood, with 33% of young adults considered overweight or obese. Alarming, the risk of heart disease increases by 2-4% for each year a young adult is obese.

Another growing problem is sugar consumption. Sugar consumption has increased by nearly 20% from 1970 to 2005. The American Heart Association recently issued a scientific statement recommending reductions in added sugar intake in response to research linking sugar to obesity and coronary heart disease risk. Adolescents consume more sugar than any other age group and this continues into young adulthood.

Researchers believe that 80% of cardiovascular disease events are preventable through diet and lifestyle modifications. Diets low in saturated fat and high in fruits and vegetables have been proven to reduce the risk of cardiac events. Despite this evidence, young adults tend to have high intakes of solid fats, added sugars and sodium, compounded by inadequate intakes of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fiber.

Currently, less than half of young adults in the United States are screened for coronary heart disease. In addition, the majority of young adults are unaware of their risk. The authors of this review note that early detection is critical to identify individuals at risk and to promote lifestyle changes before coronary heart disease progression can occur.

In particular, the authors note that the college campus is an ideal forum to reach large numbers of young adults, as nearly 50% of them are enrolled in colleges and universities. The authors point to several studies in which college interventions, particularly those targeting the campus dining hall, have been successful in promoting healthier choices that significantly reduce both the short- and long-term risk of coronary heart disease.

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## Do You Avoid Milk and Dairy Products?

*Review says dairy consumption does not increase cardiovascular risk and should be included in most diets*

Milk and dairy products play a role in the diet of some six billion people around the world. Nonetheless, many consumers steer away from milk and dairy products, believing that these products are not as healthful as they once believed. In particular, fewer and fewer children regularly drink milk, which was once thought essential to support strong bones and growth. A review published in the March 2014 issue of *Advances in Nutrition*, "[Milk, Dairy Products, and Their Functional Effects in Humans: A Narrative Review of Recent Evidence](#)," allays many concerns about dairy consumption.

Many people today believe milk and dairy products are not heart healthy because they are high in saturated fats and cholesterol. In fact, the authors of this review note that the "vast majority of epidemiologic and intervention studies performed during the past few years suggest that dairy products do not adversely affect surrogate markers of cardiovascular disease and cardiovascular prognosis." In particular, the authors point to a study in which more than 30,000 participants were followed for 13 years. No association between dairy consumption and cardiovascular disease or stroke incidence was observed. Conversely, higher dairy intakes were associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease.

This review also examined the relationship between dairy consumption and weight, diabetes, blood pressure, cancer, and cognitive function. The authors, for example, pointed to a number of studies indicating that increased milk and dairy consumption helped promote healthy weight; however, they noted other studies that did not support these conclusions.

Dairy, particularly low-fat dairy, has been connected to a lower risk of type 2 diabetes. These findings are based on long-term prospective studies involving tens of thousands of participants, including the Women's Health Study and the Nurses' Health Study. Notably, the American Diabetes Association does recommend consuming milk and dairy products.

Dairy consumption has also been linked to a lower risk of some cancers. Researchers believe that various compounds found in milk, including calcium, vitamin D and linoleic acid, play important roles in the prevention of cancer. In one seven-year study involving close to half a million participants, the researchers found dairy consumption significantly reduced the risk of gastrointestinal cancer, particularly colorectal cancer. On the other hand, some studies have suggested that high milk and dairy intakes may be associated with a greater risk of prostate cancer; while studies on dairy and breast and bladder cancer have been inconclusive.

In conclusion, upon evaluating the latest evidence from around the world, the authors believe that milk and dairy products should be part of a balanced diet in the absence of clear contraindications such as lactose intolerance.

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