

Can diet prevent stroke?

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There can be no doubt that the Cretan Mediterranean diet can prevent stroke. In the Seven Countries Study, it was discovered that the coronary risk in Crete was only 1/15th what it was in Finland. In the Israeli diet study, the Mediterranean diet was better for diabetes and insulin resistance than a low-fat diet or a low-carbohydrate diet. In the Lyon Diet Heart Study, in secondary prevention, among patients with a prior coronary event, the Mediterranean diet reduced stroke by more than 60% in 4 years, compared to a "prudent Western diet" that approximated the low-fat diet then recommended. This was twice the effect of simvastatin in the contemporaneous 4S trial. In primary prevention, the Mediterranean diet was equally impressive. In the Spanish PREDIMED trial, in high-risk primary prevention, there was a significant reduction of cardiovascular events in both Mediterranean arms of the study (Mediterranean diet supplemented by mixed nuts, and Mediterranean diet supplemented with olive oil), compared with a low-fat diet. With the Mediterranean diet supplemented by nuts, there was a 47% reduction of stroke in 5 years. Besides cholesterol, red meat contains carnitine and egg yolk contains phosphatidylcholine, which result in formation of toxic trimethylamine n-oxide (TMAO). TMAO levels in the top quartile increased risk 2.5-fold in 3 years in patients referred for coronary angiography. Patients at risk of stroke should consume a Cretan Mediterranean diet, avoiding egg yolk and red meat. This dietary pattern definitely reduces the risk of stroke.