

Eating low-fat dairy foods may reduce your risk of stroke

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If you eat low-fat dairy foods, you may be reducing your risk of stroke.

In a Swedish study published in the American Heart Association's journal [Stroke](#), people who drank low-fat milk and ate low-fat yogurt and cheese had a lower risk of stroke compared to those who consumed full-fat dairy foods.

Among 74,961 adults 45 to 83 years old, those who ate low-fat dairy foods had a 12 percent lower risk of stroke and a 13 percent lower risk of [ischemic stroke](#) than those who ate high-fat dairy foods.

Participants were free of heart disease, stroke and cancer at the start of the study. All completed a 96-item food and beverage questionnaire to determine [dietary habits](#). Food and drink consumption frequency was divided into eight categories, ranging from never to four servings per day.

During the 10-year follow-up, 4,089 strokes occurred (1,680 in women and 2,409 in men): 3,159 ischemic, 583 hemorrhagic and 347 unspecified strokes.

"This is the largest study to date to examine the association between consumption of total, low-fat, full-fat and specific dairy foods and the risk of stroke in adult men and women," said Susanna Larsson, Ph.D., the study's first author and associate professor of epidemiology in the Division of Nutritional Epidemiology, National Institute of

[Environmental Medicine](#), at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden.

"From a public health perspective, if people consume more low-fat dairy foods rather than high-fat dairy foods, they will benefit from a reduced risk of stroke and other positive health outcomes."

The benefits of low-fat dairy foods are likely due to the vitamins and minerals they contain: calcium, potassium, magnesium and vitamin D.

"It is possible that vitamin D in low-fat dairy foods may explain, in part, the observed lowered risk of stroke in this study because of its potential effect on [blood pressure](#)," Larsson said.

Low-fat dairy food is one part of the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) Diet, which reduces blood pressure. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for stroke.

Northern Europeans and North Americans traditionally consume much more dairy foods than other global populations. So switching to low-fat dairy products could impact stroke risk for millions of people, Larsson said. More research on the link between low-fat dairy consumption and risk of stroke is needed, Larsson said.

Provided by American Heart Association

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