

Few persons with metabolic syndrome adhere to nutrition recommendations

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Adherence to dietary recommendations is weak among people suffering from metabolic syndrome or having increased risk for metabolic syndrome, according to the Nordic SYSDIET study led by the University of Eastern Finland. In most cases, the diet is too high in salt and saturated fat, and too low in dietary fibre and unsaturated fat. Furthermore, many don't have a sufficient intake of vitamin D. Metabolic syndrome is becoming increasingly widespread, and it is associated with an elevated risk of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. From the viewpoint of the prevention of these diseases, adherence to dietary recommendations is of vital importance for those belonging to this risk group.

Published in *Food & Nutrition Research*, the study was the first to investigate [adherence](#) to the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations among persons with [metabolic syndrome](#) or having increased risk for metabolic syndrome. A total of 175 persons fulfilling at least two criteria for metabolic syndrome – for instance elevated blood pressure, elevated fasting plasma glucose concentration or abnormal blood lipid profile – and who were at least slightly overweight, took part in the study. The participants represented all other Nordic countries except Norway. The intake of nutrients was assessed by food diaries kept for four days.

The diet in more than 80% of the participants was too high in hard, i.e. saturated fat. Correspondingly, the intake of soft, polyunsaturated fat was sufficient only in one third of the participants. More than 75% of the participants had too low [dietary fibre](#) intake, while 65% had too

much salt. Furthermore, the intake of vitamin D was insufficient among 20% of the participants, and one third of men and one fourth of women consumed too much alcohol.

According to the researchers, the low adherence to nutrition recommendations is likely to further increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases and [diabetes](#), and the results indicate that the Nordic countries should increasingly invest in dietary assessments and counselling aimed at persons exhibiting features of metabolic syndrome.

Dietary assessment was conducted in the run-in period of the SYSDIET study. The study also included a six-month dietary intervention which established that the recommended diet consisting of Nordic ingredients improved serum lipid profile and, consequently, reduced the risk of coronary artery disease. The healthy Nordic diet also decreased the inflammation factor levels associated with metabolic syndrome.

Provided by University of Eastern Finland

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