

?DASH? Diet Lowers Blood Pressure and Reduces Risk of Kidney Disease

Research from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health suggests the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) Diet has shown to be effective in preventing other chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular disease and kidney disease. The diet is high in nuts and legumes, low-fat dairy, whole grains, fruits and vegetables and low in red and processed meat, sugar-sweetened beverages and sodium. Researchers examined records from the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) study which in 1987 began following a group of over 15,000 middle aged adults for more than 20 years.

The ARIC Study was started in 1987 by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) as an epidemiological study in four U.S. communities. The goals of the ARIC study were to characterize heart failure stages, determine genetic and environmental causes, and monitor long term trends among the population. Despite being a study focused on cardiovascular disease, researchers have been able to use the data collected to extrapolate results for other chronic illnesses. During the study, participants were asked to log their food intake for the previous year, noting the types of foods and frequencies they ate them. While participants were not instructed what to eat, they were asked to record their adherence to a DASH-style diet. Their adherence was categorized into a score based on low intake of red and processed meat, sweetened beverages and sodium; and high intake of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and legumes, and low-fat dairy. Researchers determined if a participant developed kidney disease via blood tests of glomerular filtration rate, learning about a kidney disease-related hospitalization or death, or finding out about ESRD resulting in dialysis or transplant.

Participants with the lowest DASH diet scores, meaning they ate few ?good? foods like fruits, vegetables and nuts but ate more red meat and sodium, were 16% more likely to develop kidney disease than those who had higher DASH scores. Those who had the highest intake of red and processed meats and sodium were at a 22% higher risk of developing chronic kidney disease.

Study leader Casey Rebholz believes this diet appears to lower kidney disease risk because of its ability to reduce blood pressure; hypertension is one of the leading causes of kidney disease. Another possible explanation for this relationship could be related to the ?dietary acid load? in the foods people eat. Several independent researchers have shown that high dietary acid may be linked to kidney disease. High acid foods include meats and cheeses whereas low acid foods are fruits and vegetables.

With these dietary links to the prevention of chronic illnesses, Rebholz believes it is critical to pay attention to diet before these diseases develop.

medical advice or treatment, and consultation with your doctor or healthcare professional is strongly recommended. The DPC Education Center is a section 501(c)(3) non-profit charity (37-1698796). Contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent permitted by the law.

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