

Diet & Health Study News

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A Heartfelt Thanks

Dear Participant,

The NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study is now in its 14th year and still going strong—thanks to your participation! At this year's AARP Life@50+ National Event & Expo in Washington, D.C., I spoke about the results of a recent study that looked at the Mediterranean diet and its effects on health among participants in the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study. Those results are discussed below.

We've published several dozen scientific articles in the past year. These reports have advanced our understanding of how to prevent cancer and other chronic diseases. For example, a dietary pattern that aligns with Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005 was shown to lower the risk of colorectal cancer. We showed in several papers that being overweight or obese increases the risk of cancers of the breast, colon, esophagus, pancreas, uterus, kidney, bladder, and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. In addition, our research showed that physical activity lowers the risk of premature death and colorectal and kidney cancers. These publications have received a great deal of attention within the scientific community and the media. They represent an enormous contribution to public health!

Without your participation, none of this would be possible. It is important to us that we stay in touch with you every year. Please feel free to contact us by email or phone with any questions you may have about the study. Remember, you can get up-to-date information about the study at <http://dietandhealth.cancer.gov>.

Thank you for your continued time and participation in the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study!

Arthur Schatzkin, M.D., Dr.P.H.
NIH-AARP Diet & Health Study



The Mediterranean Diet Reduces the Risk of Dying from Chronic Diseases

The 'Mediterranean diet' reflects the traditional cuisine of Crete and neighboring regions, including Greece and southern Italy. It consists of mostly fresh vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, whole grains, fish, monounsaturated fats such as olive oil, moderate to low amounts of dairy and alcohol, and low amounts of meat.

Results from the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study have shown that even in a U.S. population, adherence to a Mediterranean-type diet reduces the risk of dying prematurely—both overall and from cardiovascular disease and cancer.

A 9-point Mediterranean diet score was constructed for 214,284 men and 166,012 women in the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study. Men who scored high (followed the diet more closely) were 17% less likely to die from cancer and 22% less likely to die from cardiovascular disease. Women with a high score were 14% less likely to die from cancer and 21% less likely to die from cardiovascular disease.

Mediterranean dietary pattern and prediction of all-cause mortality in a U.S. population: results from the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study, by Mitrou, Kipnis, Thiébaud, et al. Archives of Internal Medicine, December 2007



Physical Activity Recommendations and Decreased Risk of Mortality

The Office of the U.S. Surgeon General, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American College of Sports Medicine all support the recommended minimum of 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week or at least 20 minutes of vigorous exercise 3 times per week. A recent study reported that out of 252,925 participants in the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study (both men and women), those who followed the physical activity guidelines had a 27% lower risk of premature death than those who did not. Furthermore, those who exceeded the recommendations had a 32% lower risk of premature death than those who did not follow the guidelines. This study suggests that following current physical activity guidelines can play an important role in living longer.

Physical activity recommendations and decreased risk of mortality, by Leitzmann, Park, Blair et al. Archives of Internal Medicine, December 2007

ASA24 and ACT-24: New Web-Based Questionnaires

The National Cancer Institute has developed two new web-based diet and physical activity evaluation tools. One is called ACT-24 (Activities Completed over Time in 24 Hours), which asks you to enter the activities you engaged in during the previous day. The other web-based tool is called ASA24 (Automated Self-Administered 24-hour Dietary Recall), which asks you to report the foods you ate on the previous day. Each computer program includes user-friendly features such as icons and pictures, audio cues, or even an animated character to guide you through the questionnaire. Future NIH-AARP Diet and Health Studies will employ these web-based questionnaires to improve our understanding of diet, physical activity, and disease.

Check Our Website

You can get up-to-date information about the study at our website:

<http://dietandhealth.cancer.gov>

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