

[IMAGE]

The Greatest Thing IS Sliced Bread

By 2030, approximately one in five Americans (70 million people) will be 65 years or older. Besides being the fastest-growing segment of the population, seniors suffer from the most cases of cardiovascular disease (CVD), including stroke, heart disease and heart attack. Preventive health measures have been thought to have a lesser effect on this population than on younger individuals. Thanks to a recent study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, that view may change, however.

Researchers compared risk for cardiovascular disease with fiber intake from cereals (including whole-grain breads and wheat bran), fruit and vegetable sources in seniors. More than 3,500 men and women 65 years or older were surveyed for dietary fiber consumption, then followed for about a decade to record the development of cases of CVD.

Eating more cereal fiber was associated with a significantly reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, with those eating the most cereal fiber 21% less likely to develop the condition than those eating the least. Dark breads, including whole wheat, rye and pumpernickel, reduced CVD risk the most. Fiber intake from fruits and vegetables did not appear to similarly reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease.

The authors of this study mention that eating just two additional slices of whole-grain bread daily would have been enough to raise individuals from the lowest to the highest cereal-fiber group. Since nutritional changes are less expensive and less dangerous than medical or surgical solutions down the road, heed this information and be sure to eat plenty of whole grains. Obtaining enough cereal fiber is easy: Simply replace refined-grain breads with whole-grain ones and eat whole-grain cereals instead of sugary cereals, muffins or doughnuts.

Reference

Mozaffarian D, Kumanyika SK, et al. Cereal, fruit and vegetable fiber intake and the risk of cardiovascular disease in elderly individuals. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2003;289(13), pp. 1659-1666.

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