

[IMAGE]

Iron Protects Your Heart

By Editorial Staff

When you think of iron (not the mineral), words like *strong* and *solid* likely come to mind. If asked to envision it as a protective device, you might think of iron in terms of a shield or armor, protecting your heart and other vital organs.

Now think about iron the mineral. It protects the heart, too, albeit in a different way. Being deficient in iron, particularly in middle age, can be a problem for your heart, suggests research, increasing your risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

Researchers found that among people with iron deficiency at middle age, over the next decade or so (average 13.3 years), 4.7 percent died from a cardiovascular cause such as coronary artery disease or stroke. "Functional" iron deficiency (considered more accurate than "absolute" deficiency because the former considers both circulating and stored iron) was associated with a 24 percent higher risk of coronary heart disease (CHD), a 26 percent higher risk of cardiovascular mortality and a 12 percent higher risk of mortality from any cause compared to people without a functional iron deficiency. People with absolute iron deficiency had a 20 percent higher risk of CHD, but no elevated risk of cardiovascular mortality.

Writing on their findings in *ESC Heart Failure*, the study authors calculate that if none of the subjects had functional iron deficiency at baseline, over the next 10 years, 5.4 percent of all deaths, 11.7 percent of all cardiovascular deaths, and 10.7 percent of all new CHD diagnoses could have been avoided.

While this study is observational, meaning the researchers could not determine whether iron deficiency directly causes poor cardiovascular outcomes, they did account for various other factors that could have played a role, such as age, gender, smoking status, cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes, body mass index (BMI), and inflammation. Even when accounting for these factors that could cause heart problems, middle-aged people with iron deficiency were still more likely to develop CHD and/or die from it during the decade-plus follow-up period.

Note: Keep in mind that while iron deficiency can be a health issue, so can iron toxicity (getting too much). Always talk to your doctor before taking a new vitamin, mineral or other supplement to determine proper

dosing, particularly if you are taking any medications that may interact negatively.

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