

Youngsters act on nutrition advice, study finds

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Children can be educated to choose skim or reduced-fat milk over whole milk and maintain calcium intake in the process, according to "important" new data from the Dietary Intervention Study in Children (DISC) trial.

The study examined the long-term efficacy and safety of a diet reduced in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol in more than 650 children 8 to 10 years of age who already had high levels of "bad" LDL cholesterol. The DISC team now reports trends in beverage choices in children who participated in the study.

"We found that dietary education to lower fat consumption was able to effect some changes in the diet with regard to beverages," DISC investigator Lisa Aronson Friedman from the Maryland Medical Research Institute in Baltimore told Reuters Health.

"The children receiving instruction in lowering the fat content of their diets were more likely to change the type of milk consumed from whole milk to skim or reduced-fat milk."

Also, "importantly," Friedman said, the children that received nutrition education and switched from whole milk to skim or reduced fat milk increased the relative amount of calcium in their diets compared to children who did not receive the education intervention.

"These encouraging results illustrate benefits of nutrition education during this impressionable age," Friedman and colleagues write in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association.

The study also hints, however, that no matter how children are individually educated about diet, they increase their soda consumption and lower their milk consumption as they go from childhood to adolescence. "They behaved as all other teenagers are behaving," Friedman said. Girls consumed a greater percentage of soft drinks than did boys.

The findings in this study, the researchers say, may help in planning "behavior change strategies and setting priorities for nutrition education in young populations."

Printed from the Modern Mom website: www.modernmom.com - on April 15, 2007

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