

Walnuts and fish may work differently in protecting against heart disease

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A study published in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition shows that eating walnuts lowers cholesterol more than fish, while fatty fish consumption lowers triglycerides. Because of these findings both fish and walnuts may reduce the overall risk of coronary heart disease. In a randomized crossover feeding trial, 25 normal-to-mildly hyperlipidemic adults consumed three isoenergetic diets (approximately 30% total fat and < 10% saturated fat) for four weeks each: a control diet (no nuts or fish), a walnut diet (1.5 oz of walnuts/day), or a fish diet (two servings of fatty fish/week; roughly 4 oz at each serving). Fasting blood was drawn at baseline and at the end of each diet period and analyzed for serum lipids. The participants who followed the walnut diet had a 5.4% lower serum total cholesterol level and a 9.3% lower LDL (bad) cholesterol level when compared to the control diet. Those who followed the fish diet decreased their triglyceride levels by 11.4%, and increased their HDL (good) cholesterol by 4% compared to the control diet. However, it also slightly increased their LDL cholesterol levels. "Both plant- and marine-derived omega-3 fats are cardioprotective, and since they seem to be effective for lowering different risk factors, it would be prudent to include both in the diet," said study author Joan Sabate.