

The Jury is In - Olive Oil Lowers Mortality by a Quarter and Heart Disease by Nearly One-Half

Source: John Phillip, NaturalNews.com

Followers of the popular Mediterranean diet have known for years that eating fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts, seeds and plenty of extra virgin olive oil is beneficial to health. Recent studies have continued to bolster this eating pattern, with much less emphasis on overcooked meats, hydrogenated fats and fried foods. They may not realize that many of the benefits come from the monounsaturated fats provided by the liberal use of fresh-pressed olive oil.

Reporting in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, researchers from Spain found that the monounsaturated fats found in olive oil work synergistically with essential fatty acids such as the omega-3 fat, DHA to enhance their incorporation into cell membranes. The scientists found an association between greater olive oil intake and a lower risk of dying over an average of 13.4 years of follow-up.

The researchers analyzed data garnered from dietary questionnaires provided from a cohort of 40,622 men and women residing in Spain, aged 29 to 69 years who were recruited from the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition. The questions specifically detailed caloric intake and consumption of olive oil in their diet. During the follow-up period, there were 416 deaths from cardiovascular disease, 956 cancer deaths and 417 deaths from other causes.

Olive oil shields against inflammation and prevents blood sugar spikes to thwart chronic disease

Study participants whose olive oil intake ranked in the top quarter had a 26 percent lower risk of dying of any cause and a 44 percent lower risk of dying from heart disease compared to those who did not consume olive oil. The risk of mortality from causes other than cancer or heart disease was reduced by 38 percent for those whose olive oil intake was greatest. The authors noted that there is evidence that olive oil may be protective against specific types of cancer, particularly breast cancer.

The scientists conducting the study determined that protective monounsaturated fats, vitamin E and phenolic compounds in olive oil provide a synergistic effect to shield against heart disease. In prior research, olive oil has been shown to improve systemic inflammation and glycemic control in randomized clinical trials.

The authors concluded, "To our knowledge, this is the first prospective study to show that olive oil consumption reduces the risk of mortality... our findings provide further evidence on the effects that one of the key components of the Mediterranean diet has on mortality and support

the need to preserve the habitual use of olive oil within this healthy dietary pattern." Nutrition experts recommend adding one to two tablespoons of fresh-pressed extra virgin olive oil (post-cooking to prevent degradation of the oil) to your meals each day to lower the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Sources for this article include:

<http://www.ajcn.org/content/96/1/142.abstract>