TuSalud

Healthy Diets Could Lower Heart Disease Risk in Latinos

Preliminary research found that more than one diet plan could lead to better cardiovascular health.

March 31, 2022 By Laura Schmidt

Diet could help explain the different rates of heart disease and stroke seen in different Latino populations, according to preliminary research from a study presented at the American Heart Association's Epidemiology, Prevention, Lifestyle & Cardiometabolic Health Conference 2022.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans issued by the Department of Health and Human Services suggest several healthy eating patterns to prevent cardiovascular disease (CVD). The study measured adherence to three of these eating patterns and their effect on CVD risk: an alternative Mediterranean diet, which emphasizes consumption of vegetables, fruits, nuts, olive oil, whole grains and seeds; a plant-based diet, which emphasizes consumption of healthy plant food; and overall healthy eating, as defined by an index that examines the extent to which a person's diet aligns with the 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

The Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos included 10,766 adults (average age 46 years; 63.4% female) who did not have cancer or CVD when they enrolled in the study. The Hispanic Community Health Study is a population-based study of adults ages 18 to 74 of Cuban, Dominican, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Central American and South American descent who live in the Bronx, Chicago, Miami and San Diego.

Participants were asked to complete two 24-hour dietary recall questionnaires to describe the food types and quantities they consumed the previous day. The information was then used to derive scores on dietary quality measures by comparing them to the three healthy eating plans used in the study.

"Higher dietary scores for each of the three diets represent better individual healthy eating patterns," lead author Yi-Yun Chen, a resident at Jacobi Medical Center at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, said in a press release.

Results showed that during the average six-year follow-up period, 248 (2.3%) people had a heart attack or stroke. The healthiest diets were found among Mexican adults, followed by people of Dominican, South American, Central American, Cuban and Puerto Rican descent.

“Comparing those in the top third of adherence to each diet with those in the lowest third, the risk of heart attack/stroke was reduced 46% for those who more closely followed the alternative Mediterranean Diet, 36% for those scoring high on the Healthy Eating Index dietary pattern and 44% for those who scored higher on following the Plant-based Diet Index,” the researchers concluded.

These results suggest that a person does not necessarily need to follow one specific diet to achieve better cardiovascular health.

“Since greater adherence to all three healthy dietary patterns was associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease, we suggest that increasing the consumption of healthy, plant-based foods may help the younger generation achieve better cardiovascular health similar to their relatives who were born outside the U.S.,” Chen said in the press release.

To learn more about the relationship between food and health, read “Eating Healthy Can Extend Life by a Decade—and Also Lower Cancer Risk.”

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.tusaludmag.com/article/healthy-diets-lower-heart-disease-risk-latinos