

High-fat dairy products linked to reduced type 2 diabetes risk

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Consumption of high-fat yoghurt and cheese are linked to a reduction in the risk of type 2 diabetes by as much as a fifth, according to new research from Lund University in Sweden. High meat consumption, on the other hand, is linked to a higher risk.

The findings, which have been published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, are in line with previous studies of [eating habits](#) that indicated a link between high consumption of [dairy products](#) and a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes.

However, the new study indicates that it is high-fat dairy products specifically that are associated with reduced risk.

"Those who ate the most high-fat dairy products had a 23 per cent lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes than those who ate the least. High [meat](#) consumption was linked to an increased risk of type 2 diabetes regardless of the fat content of the meat", said Ulrika Ericson, who conducted the study.

The researchers studied the eating habits of 27 000 individuals aged 45 to 74. The participants took part in the Malmö Diet and Cancer study in the early 1990s, in which they provided details of their eating habits. Twenty years on, over ten per cent – 2 860 people – had developed type 2 diabetes.

The aim of the study has been to clarify the significance of fat in food for the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Instead of focusing on the total intake of saturated fat, the researchers looked at different sources of saturated fat.

Both meat and dairy products contain saturated fat, but certain saturated fatty acids are particularly common in dairy products. This difference could be one of the reasons why most studies show that those who eat meat are at higher risk of type 2

diabetes, whereas those who eat a lot of dairy products appear to have a lower risk.

"When we investigated the consumption of saturated fatty acids that are slightly more common in dairy products than in meat, we observed a link with a reduced risk of type 2 [diabetes](#). However, we have not ruled out the possibility that other components of dairy products such as yoghurt and cheese may have contributed to our results. We have taken into account many dietary and lifestyle factors in our analysis, such as fermentation, calcium, vitamin D and physical activity. However, there may be other factors that we have not been able to measure that are shared by those who eat large quantities of high-fat dairy products. Moreover, different food components can interact with each other. For example, in one study, saturated fat in cheese appeared to have less of a cholesterol-raising effect than [saturated fat](#) in butter.

"Our results suggest that we should not focus solely on fat, but rather consider what foods we eat. Many foodstuffs contain different components that are harmful or beneficial to health, and it is the overall balance that is important."

More information: "Food sources of fat may clarify the inconsistent role of dietary fat intake for incidence of type 2 diabetes." *Am J Clin Nutr* ajcn103010; First published online April 1, 2015. [DOI: 10.3945/ajcn.114.103010](https://doi.org/10.3945/ajcn.114.103010)

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