Reduced and/or modified dietary fat may prevent cardiovascular disease

Clinical question
How effective is reduction and/or modification of dietary fat for preventing cardiovascular disease and cancer?

Bottom line
Reducing saturated fat by reducing and/or modifying dietary fat reduced the risk of cardiovascular events by 14%. Subgrouping suggested this reduction in cardiovascular events was seen in studies of fat modification but not reduction of at least 2 years’ duration, and in studies of men (not of women). There were no clear effects of dietary fat changes on total mortality or cardiovascular mortality. This did not alter with subgrouping or sensitivity analysis. No evidence was found on the long-term health effects of altering trans fat intake. There was no effect of altering dietary fat intake on cancer diagnoses or deaths.

Caveat
Few studies compared reduced with modified fat diets, so direct comparison was not possible. The ideal type of unsaturated fat was unclear.

Context
Reduction and modification of dietary fats have differing effects on cardiovascular risk factors (such as serum cholesterol), but their effects on important health outcomes are less clear.

Cochrane Systematic Review
Hooper L et al. Reduced or modified dietary fat for preventing cardiovascular disease. Cochrane Reviews, 2011, Issue 7. Article No. CD002137. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD002137.pub2. This review contains 48 studies involving 71,795 participants.

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