
Healthy Diet, Exercise Beneficial for Heart Failure Patients



According to research presented at the Mexican Congress of Cardiology 2015, healthy diet and exercise can significantly benefit patients with heart failure.

There are approximately 750,000 patients in Mexico that live with heart failure. It is estimated that nearly 75,000 more patients will get heart failure each year.

Dr. Arturo Orea, study author and cardiology service coordinator at the National Institute of Respiratory Disease (Instituto Nacional de Enfermedades Respiratorias "Ismael Cosío Villegas") in Mexico City explained that in Mexico, only 25 to 37 percent of women remain alive after five years. He pointed out that while medicines may improve the outcome of heart failure, most patients do not have a very bright future.

As per Dr. Orea's research, 40 percent of patients with heart failure in Mexico have diabetes; 41 percent have high cholesterol; 57 percent have high triglycerides, one-quarter are obese, 55 percent have high blood pressure and 31 percent smoke. Less than 1 percent of these patients are physically active.

While exercise is generally recommended for patients with heart failure, there is a need for greater evidence to specifically show the benefits of a healthy diet. As pointed out by Dr. Orea, there are no specific guidelines available that indicate how much carbohydrate is good and how much fat and protein is recommended for patients with heart failure. General restrictions on sodium and fluids are there but there is no specific guidelines on other minerals.

Dr. Orea and colleagues investigated the effect of diet and exercise in patients with heart failure. Their findings show that patients who followed a low carbohydrate diet (40-50% carbohydrates, 30-40% protein and 20% fat) and did aerobic and resistance exercise had reduced blood pressure and total body water as compared those who didn't. Dr. Orea explains that this may be because the respiratory coefficient of carbohydrates is higher than fat and proteins and thus they require more oxygen and respiratory effort to metabolise. He also pointed out that a higher intake of unsaturated fat could improve the integrity and function of cells. Finally, exercise improves endothelial function resulting in better delivery of nutrients and oxygen.

See also: [Exercise after Heart Attack Improves Recovery](#)

Another study also evaluated the impact of sodium, potassium and magnesium ingestion on hospitalisation and death in 129 patients with heart failure. The results showed that sodium intake was lower in patients who died while those who consumed less than 200 mg/day of magnesium had a nearly three times higher risk of hospitalisation or death.

Dr Orea said: "Patients with heart failure should ensure that they get enough magnesium in their diet by eating dark leafy greens, nuts, fish, whole grains and bananas. Our finding of a lower sodium intake in patients who died might be explained by the fact that when sodium intake reduction is excessive, the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system is more active, which can increase blood pressure."

Source: [ESC](#)

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