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## EFFECTS OF A SHIFT FROM A MIXED DIET TO A LACTO-VEGETARIAN DIET ON DISEASE RISK MARKERS FOR CANCERS AND CORONARY HEART DISEASES

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There is substantial evidence that vegetarians have lower incidence of several cancer forms and coronary heart diseases, but there is a debate as to why this is the case. The objective of the study was to explore whether a shift from a mixed diet to a lacto-vegetarian diet would lead to a decrease in risk for cancers and coronary heart diseases indicated by surrogate markers. Twenty volunteers participated in the study (4 men and 16 women, mean age 44 years, range 27-61) from a town in western Sweden. Clinical examinations were performed, blood samples were drawn, fecal and urine samples were collected and dietary survey, i.e. repeated 24-h recalls were carried out before (0 months) and 3, 6, 12 and 48 months after the shift from a mixed diet to a lacto-vegetarian diet. A dietician educated the volunteers with regard to the vegetarian diet regimen, organized and taught the vegetarian cooking courses. The dietary change led to an increase in the intake of total carbohydrates and fibre and a decrease in fat, protein and sucrose. The disease risk markers, body weight, body mass index, fecal and urinary mutagenic activity, several fecal enzymes, systolic and diastolic blood pressure, total cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol decreased significantly. To conclude, there was a decrease in disease risk markers. The main finding in this study is that there was a simultaneous decrease in risk markers, both for cancers and coronary heart diseases.

### Biography

Gunnar Johansson is a Professor of Health Sciences at Halmstad University, Sweden. He defended his doctoral thesis on diet and cancer at the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden 1990.

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