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THE CHANGE OF SOME CORONARY HEART DISEASE RISK MARKERS WHEN GOING FROM A MIXED DIET TO A LACTO-VEGETARIAN DIET

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There is substantial evidence that vegetarians have lower incidence of coronary heart disease, 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 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 and dietary survey, i.e. repeated 24-h recalls were carried out before (0 months) and 3, 6 and 12 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 leads to an increase in the intake of total carbohydrates and fibre and a decrease in fat, protein and sucrose. The coronary heart disease risk markers, body weight, body mass index, 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 weight loss, sustained for one year, without any recommendation to decrease the energy intake or any focus on weight reduction.

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 1990.

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