

A recent study in the *British Journal of Nutrition* has shown a significant relationship between high lycopene intakes and a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease.

Lycopene intake is related to decreased heart disease risk

Lycopene is a carotenoid and antioxidant that is present in red and pink colored fruits and vegetables. Previous research has indicated that lycopene likely has benefits for heart health, however not all research has been consistent. Studies measuring circulating lycopene generally show an inverse relationship between cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk and lycopene levels, but studies based solely on dietary or supplemental lycopene intake have not been as conclusive.

In a new study published in the *British Journal of Nutrition*, researchers analyzed lycopene intake from 584 participants in the Framingham Offspring Study. To characterize the relationship between lycopene intake and the incidence of CVD, CHD (coronary heart disease, which includes myocardial infarction, coronary insufficiency, and angina pectoris) and stroke, repeated measures of lycopene were taken over 10 years.

The average lycopene intake for the study group was 7.9 mg per day. After analyzing the data, the highest average intakes of lycopene were associated with a 17% reduction in CVD incidence, and a 26% reduction in the incidence of CHD. There was no association observed between lycopene intake and the incidence of stroke.

The results of this study provide increasing evidence of a link between lycopene intake and a reduction in CVD risk, although it is still unclear whether other components of tomatoes and tomato products may also be partly responsible for some of the observed benefit.

Jacques PF, Lyass A, Massaro JM, Vasan RS, D'Agostino Sr RB. Relationship of lycopene intake and consumption of tomato products to incident CVD. *Br J Nutr*. 2013 Jan 15:1-7.