

Eat more veggies, less red meat to keep BP in check

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Consumption of vegetables, fruits, and other plant foods seems to reduce the risk of elevated blood pressure, whereas intake of meat raises the risk, according to a report in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition for December.

Several reports have shown similar associations, but few studies have specifically addressed this topic in young adults, lead author Dr. Lyn M. Steffen, from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, and colleagues note.

They evaluated the 15-year incidence of elevated blood pressure -- defined as BP of at least 130 over 85 or use of a BP lowering agent -- in 4300 subjects, comprising roughly equal numbers of black and white men and women, between 18 and 30 years of age at baseline. Dietary assessments were conducted at enrollment and at 15 years into the study.

As plant food intake rose, the risk of elevated blood pressure fell, the report indicates. Relative to the lowest quintile of intake, the second through fifth quintiles of intake cut the risk from 27% to 36%, respectively.

Just the opposite trend was seen with meat intake, whereas dairy consumption did not seem to have a consistent effect on blood pressure, the investigators found.

These results, the authors conclude, suggest that greater plant food intakes and lower meat intakes as part of a habitual diet may prevent the development of high blood pressure, a major risk factors for heart disease.