

... just the FACTS

Study summaries examining the latest science on beef's place in a healthy diet

HIGHER RED MEAT INTAKES ≥ 3.5 SERVINGS/WEEK DO NOT INCREASE LDL CHOLESTEROL OR BLOOD PRESSURE

STUDY DESIGN:

Meta-analysis of 24 RCTs (Randomized Controlled Trials).

OBJECTIVE:

To assess the effect of eating ≥ 0.5 servings* of red meat/day on blood lipids, lipoproteins and blood pressure.

*1 serving = 70 g or 2.5 oz cooked red meat.

RESULTS:

- CVD risk markers decreased in all subjects over time, with no difference in response between groups who consumed ≥ 0.5 or < 0.5 servings of red meat/day:
 - Total cholesterol
 - LDL cholesterol
 - Total: HDL cholesterol ratio
 - Triglycerides
 - Diastolic blood pressure
- Median red meat intake in the intervention diets was 2 servings/day (140 g) - more than double what the average Canadian consumes.
- The highest category of red meat intake, 3 servings/day, did not increase LDL cholesterol or blood pressure.

STRENGTH:

The authors note this is the first systematically searched meta-analysis of RCTs to assess the effect of ≥ 0.5 servings of red meat/day on blood lipids and blood pressure. Unlike observational studies, RCTs support conclusions regarding cause and effect.

CONCLUSION:

Diets higher in red meat (i.e., ≥ 3.5 servings/week) have no adverse effect on clinically relevant CVD risk factors, compared to diets with little to no red meat.

O'Connor LE et al. Total red meat intake of ≥ 0.5 servings/d does not negatively influence cardiovascular disease risk factors: a systemically searched meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. Am J Clin Nutr 2017;105(1):57-69.