

Two recent heart health studies gain media traction

August 18, 2010

Two studies recently published in peer-reviewed scientific journals suggest that red meat consumption is associated with a higher risk of heart failure and coronary heart disease.

The first study, "[Red meat consumption and risk of heart failure in male physicians](#)," published in the journal of *Nutrition, Metabolism and Cardiovascular* looked at the food intakes and incidence of heart failure of 21,120 healthy men who were part of the Physicians' Health Study. The conclusions indicate that higher intake of red meat is associated with an increased risk of heart failure. We have seen coverage of this study thus far only on [Food Navigator.com](#) and will continue to monitor for coverage.

The second study, "[Major Dietary Protein Sources and Risk of Coronary Heart Disease in Women](#)," was published in the August edition of *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*. This study followed 84,136 women aged 30 to 55 years in the Nurses' Health Study using a dietary questionnaire. The study suggests that women who eat two servings of red meat per day have a 30 percent increased risk of heart disease compared with women who average three to four servings per week, but noted that it is not necessary to cut out red meat altogether to improve heart health. Higher intakes of poultry, fish and nuts were significantly associated with lower risk of coronary heart disease.

We have seen moderate media coverage of the *Circulation* study through online and broadcast mediums. The majority of broadcasts have aired on local news stations in the media markets for Denver, Colo., Detroit, Mich., Los Angeles, Calif., Jacksonville, Fla., Spokane, Wash., and Kansas City, Mo. Broadcast reporting largely consisted of brief discussion of how less red meat and more chocolate could be good for one's heart health. The majority of the coverage is recommending cutting back on meat. The reality is the average American consumes 1.7 ounces of beef per day which is well within the Dietary Guidelines. Online coverage has included such outlets as [WebMD.com](#), [health.msn.com](#), [CNN.com](#) and [sciencedaily.com](#)

We have developed talking points for the *Circulation* study to be used reactively for media inquiries, which are copied below. Should you need additional information, spokesperson support, etc., please contact Michele Peterson Murray, Executive Director, Food and Nutrition Communications at 303-580-3343 or at mpmurray@beef.org or Shalene McNeill, Ph.D., R.D., Executive Director, Human Nutrition Research at 830-569-0046 or at smcneill@beef.org.

Heart Health Study Response Talking Points

Major Dietary Protein Sources and Risk of Coronary Heart Disease in Women

Circulation, August 2010

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KEY MESSAGES

Nothing about this study changes the fact that beef is an important part of a healthy diet.

- Just in the past few months, a landmark study took a much more comprehensive evaluation of the science and found no association between red meat and heart disease, diabetes and stroke.
 - This landmark study was published in June in the same journal (*Circulation*) and was led by another Harvard research group.

- The meta-analysis reviewed all the available published science on this subject while this study looked at just one population group: women nurses who have been followed by Harvard for 26 years.
 - The meta-analysis published in June *Circulation* reviewed 20 studies and covered both men and women.
 - While both studies were sizeable, the meta-analysis published in June included 1.2 million individuals compared to today's study which included 84,000 individuals.
- The meta-analysis published in June reviewed all kinds of studies including gold standard for studies, randomized clinical trials, in addition to population-based studies like the one this one.

Americans are actually eating beef well within what is recommended in the Dietary Guidelines.

- Dietary Guidelines recommends 5.5 ounces from the meat and beans group each day. The average American consumes 1.7 ounces of beef per day which is well within the Dietary Guidelines.

The scientific evidence to support the role of lean beef in a heart-healthy diet is strong.

- Lean beef, trimmed of visible fat, can be a part of a low saturated fat diet that does not increase risk for heart disease or stroke.
- A nine-month randomized clinical trial, which is considered gold standard in research, suggests lean red meat can be part of a cholesterol-lowering diet.
- In fact, research also shows that people consuming beef as part of a heart healthy diet are more likely to adhere to this healthy eating pattern long term.
- The folks who are concerned about heart health are also typically watching their weight. The reality is that beef is actually a calorie saver. On average, a 3-ounce serving of lean beef is only 154 calories yet a naturally rich source of 10 essential nutrients – including protein, zinc, iron and B-vitamins – that are needed for a healthy, active lifestyle.
 - Choline, one of the 10 essential nutrients found in beef, may play a role in breaking down homocysteine, an amino acid in the blood that may be associated with increased risk of heart disease.

Processed meats can be part of a healthy, balanced diet. They are great sources of protein, convenient and many are considered lean. The most important dietary advice people can follow are the 2005 Dietary Guidelines and *MyPyramid*, which recommend a nutrient-rich, balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low- and nonfat dairy, and lean meat.

- Leading health organizations, such as the American Dietetic Association, continue to recommend eating lean meat to maintain a healthful, balanced lifestyle.

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