

Health and science roundup: Fiber and soy diet can drop cholesterol by one-third

New York Times

Published March 7, 2003

SCI07

People with high cholesterol may lower their levels by one-third with a vegetarian diet that combines a variety of heart-healthy foods, including plenty of soy and soluble fiber, a study found.

Although a healthy diet is a mainstay of cholesterol control, people typically reduce their cholesterol only about 10 percent by changing their diet. As a result, doctors routinely prescribe cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins.

However, studies suggest certain plant foods are especially good at lowering cholesterol. The low-fat diet is based on foods shown to be individually beneficial -- soy, soluble fiber, plant sterols and almonds. Sources of soluble fiber include oats, barley, legumes, eggplant, okra and Metamucil.

Cyril Kendall of the University of Toronto, part of the team that assembled the diet, said his preliminary results suggest the diet works about as well as the older statin drugs that are still first-line therapy for high cholesterol. Kendall presented the results of his approach, called the Portfolio diet, at a meeting Thursday of the American Heart Association.

-- Associated Press

Stem-cell surgery