Loma Linda University Study Finds Plant-Based Diets are Linked to Lower Obesity, BMI Among Hispanic Adventists

Plant-based diets are associated with lower body mass index (BMI) among Hispanic members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, according to a new study published in the journal *Frontiers in Nutrition*.

LOMA LINDA, Calif. (PRWEB) April 11, 2019 -- Plant-based diets are associated with lower body mass index (BMI) among Hispanic members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, according to a new study.

The results of the study, published in the journal *Frontiers in Nutrition*, found that Hispanics who eat a plant-based diet generally weigh less and have lower BMI. Excess weight was associated with high rates of inflammation in the study.

“The study demonstrates that plant-based diet choices can help maintain healthy weight in the Hispanic population,” said Pramil N. Singh, DrPH, director of the Center for Health Research at Loma Linda University School of Public Health and lead author of the article.

While previous studies have found that plant-based diets help prevent and control obesity and metabolic disorders in largely non-Hispanic subjects, researchers from Loma Linda University, UCLA and White Memorial Medical Center wondered if similar results might apply to Hispanics and Latinos.

To find out, they enrolled 74 Seventh-day Adventists from five Hispanic churches within a 20-mile radius of Loma Linda University into a cross-sectional study of diet and health. The 74 were chosen because they lived close enough to come in for lab tests, weight and BMI analysis on a regular basis, and because many Adventists are vegetarians.

Researchers categorized participants according to their eating patterns:
- The vegans in the study did not eat meat, dairy products, fish, poultry or eggs
- The lacto-ovo vegetarians ate eggs and dairy, but not meat, fish or poultry
- The pesco-vegetarians added fish to their otherwise vegetarian diet
- The semi-vegetarians occasionally ate meat, fish or poultry
- The non-vegetarians regularly ate meat, fish and poultry.

“Vegetarian diet patterns were associated with significantly lower BMI, waist circumference and fat mass as compared to non-vegetarians,” the study reported.

Singh and other researchers recently conducted a larger study of 3,475 Adventist Hispanics. Singh’s colleague Karen Jaceldo-Siegl, DrPH, MS, published findings of that study in the American Journal of Health Promotion in February.

While the two studies took different approaches, Singh noted three major trends from the findings.

“First, plant-based eating is associated with BMI in the recommended range. Second, those who ate meat had a BMI in the range of overweight and obesity. Third, higher BMI was associated with significantly higher levels of inflammatory biomarkers, such as interleukin-6,” he said.
Funding from the Center for Hispanic Health at White Memorial Medical Center will enable the team to conduct further investigations into how plant-based eating can help U.S. Hispanics maintain healthy body weight.
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