

# This Food Prevents Heart Attacks?

Men who eat salmon or other fatty fish, such as mackerel, lake trout, halibut, herring, oysters, sardines and albacore tuna, just once a week can significantly reduce their risk of heart failure, adding to growing evidence that omega-3 fatty acids are of benefit to cardiac health.

Heart failure is a life-threatening condition that develops when the heart can no longer pump enough blood to meet the body's needs. Also known as congestive heart failure, it is usually caused by existing cardiac conditions, including high blood pressure and coronary artery disease. Heart failure is the leading cause of hospitalization among patients 65 and older and is characterized by such symptoms as fatigue and weakness, difficulty walking, rapid or irregular heartbeat and persistent coughing or wheezing.

The study: From 1998 to 2004, researchers from Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, Massachusetts followed 39,367 Swedish men between the ages of 45 and 79, none of whom had a history of heart disease or type 2 diabetes. Led by Dr. Emily Levitan, the team recorded details of each man's diet and, when applicable, inpatient hospital visits and cause of death. During the study period, 597 men developed heart failure and 34 died.

The results: The men who ate fatty fish once a week were 12 percent less likely to develop heart failure, compared with men who ate no fatty fish. Although this association did not reach statistical significance, notes Levitan, the researchers did find a statistically significant association with the intake of marine omega-3 fatty acids, which are found in cod liver and other fish oils. Specifically, the men who consumed approximately 0.36 grams a day were 33 percent less likely to develop heart failure than the men who consumed little or no marine omega-3 fatty acids.

"Previous research has demonstrated that fatty fish and omega-3 fatty acids help to combat risk factors for a range of heart-related conditions, such as lowering triglycerides [fats in the blood], reducing blood pressure, heart rate and heart rate variability," says Levitan. "Collectively, this may explain the association with the reduced risk of heart failure found in our study."

The study findings were published in the online edition of the *European Heart Journal*.