Flavonoids, vascular function and cardiovascular protection.


Abstract

A large body of evidence supports that the dietary intake of polyphenols - particularly of flavonoids and the specific class of flavonoids named flavanols - might be able to exert some beneficial vascular effects and reduce the risk for cardiovascular morbidity and mortality. The review of epidemiological and mechanistic studies supports the role of flavonoids, particularly cocoa and tea flavanols, in protecting the cardiovascular system against cardiovascular disease. Nevertheless, flavonoids are an heterogeneous group of natural molecules differently represented in fruit and vegetables and definitive data on cardiovascular benefits are lacking. The weakness of the available data include few and very small studies, no crossover designed studies and a wide range of dose and type of flavonoids tested. Thus, although flavonoid-rich foods and beverages are likely to protect cardiovascular system, further research is needed to characterize the mechanism of action on flavanol-rich foods. Long-term clinical trials are also needed to definitively clarify the benefits deriving from long-term consumption of flavanol-rich foods, particularly focussing on the lowest effective levels as well as synergism or antagonistic actions between different classes of flavonoids commonly found in foods.

Comment in

Modifying cardiovascular risk factors: newer insights and preventive measures. [Curr Pharm Des. 2009]

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