Researchers Suggest Canola Oil Helps Control Blood Glucose

Canola Council of Canada

WINNIPEG (PRNewswire-USNewswire) — Canola oil can help control blood glucose (blood sugar) in people with type 2 diabetes when included as part of a low-glycemic index (GI) diet, according to research presented at the June 2014 American Diabetes Association Scientific Sessions (abstract CT-SY24) and published in the peer-reviewed journal Diabetes Care [1]. The study of Canadian adults with type 2 diabetes shows that adding canola oil to the diet is a simple way of helping control blood glucose and risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD). Diabetes affects about 3.3 million Canadians [2] (9 percent) and 26 million Americans [3] (8.3 percent).

In the multicenter, randomized controlled trial, 141 participants with type 2 diabetes who were taking drugs to control blood glucose were given either a test or control diet for three months. The test diet was low GI (minimizes fluctuations in blood glucose levels) and higher in fat, including bread made with canola oil (31 grams of oil per person per day). The control diet was healthy, low-fat and high-fiber, emphasizing whole wheat foods. Results showed that those who consumed the canola oil diet improved blood glucose control. Importantly, participants at increased risk for adverse effects from type 2 diabetes, such as those with high blood pressure, derived the greatest benefits.

"This study shows the advantage of using canola oil in type 2 diabetes to improve both blood cholesterol and blood glucose control by reducing the glycemic load (GI multiplied by the amount of carbohydrate in the diet), especially in those at highest risk of diabetes complications," says lead researcher David J.A. Jenkins, M.D., Ph.D., DSc., professor and Canada Research Chair in Nutrition and Metabolism, Department of Nutritional Sciences, University of Toronto as well as director, Risk Factor Modification Center, St. Michael's Hospital. "These findings are timely since diabetes is expected to double in the next 20 years and means of preventing it and its complications are major concerns of governments and the general public."

Beyond its results, the "Effect of Lowering the Glycemic Load with Canola Oil on Glycemic Control and Cardiovascular Risk Factors: A Randomized Controlled Trial" is important because it's the first study to assess the combination of healthy fat consumption and a low-GI diet. The beneficial health effects of canola oil and its fat components (e.g., monounsaturated and omega-3 fats) have been independently shown in other studies.

In addition, even though study participants were being treated with drugs to control blood glucose and had low "bad" LDL cholesterol levels, canola oil consumption was associated with a significant, additional reduction in this type of cholesterol. This may translate into an extra 7 percent reduction in CVD events, Jenkins notes.

"The ability of canola oil to help control blood glucose in people with type 2 diabetes adds to existing evidence of several health benefits, including CVD risk reduction," adds Shaunda Durance-Tod, M.Sc., R.D., CanolaInfo manager, Canola Council of Canada. "Further studies are now warranted on the effect of canola oil in a Mediterranean-type diet on glycemic control, blood fats and weight loss in type 2 diabetes."

The canola oil study was led by the University of Toronto in collaboration with the University of Saskatchewan, McMaster University and University of Ottawa. It was funded by the Government of Canada and Canola Council of Canada.

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