

Dietary changes improved the health of people struggling with overweight

Type of fat in ones diet is important, and an abundance of saturated fat relative to unsaturated fats is unhealthy. Seafood is a good source of unsaturated fat that is beneficial to your health. A recent study showed that the health of 30 people struggling with overweight was significantly improved by changing the sources of dietary fat.

Globally, overweight and obesity is on the rise and considered to be a lifestyle disease. In Norway, overweight in the population has increased the last 50 years. In recent years, prevention of overweight through dietary changes has gained attention. Based on the white paper number 16 (2002-2003) "Recipe for a healthier Norway" a tariff for medical doctors was introduced in 2003. The aim of this tariff was to encourage patients with high risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes to have a healthy diet and be physically active. A study based on this tariff examined how the diet composition affected health parameters and the lipid profile in the blood, in 30 overweight men and women during a 10 month period.

Why change the diet?

A diet with a high content of saturated fat and sugar, and low in foods like fish and other seafood, brown bread, fruit and vegetables can contribute to the development of a number of lifestyle diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, obesity, cancer and diabetes. Prior to the study, the participants had a traditional Norwegian inland diet, with an emphasis on meat and dairy products. The participants' energy intake from saturated fat and sugar was not in accordance with Norwegian nutritional recommendations.

The new diet

The dietary advices for the participants included fish for dinner 3 times per week, daily use of various fish spread for lunch and snacks, daily intake of 2 portions of fruit and 3 portions of vegetables, and the use of low fat milk products. The intake of meat was reduced to 1-2 dinners of lean meat per week. The participants were also encouraged to increase their level of physical activity.

Improved health

Each participant had a weight loss of approximately 1-2 kg per month. This reduction could primarily be ascribed to a reduction of body fat. After 2 months, the blood samples showed a significant improvement of the lipid profile. After 10 months, the level of total cholesterol was reduced by 25% on average in the whole group. The bad cholesterol "LDL" was reduced by over 30% and the level of triglyceride was reduced by approximately 45% on average. The changes in blood lipid profile show that the risk of developing heart diseases and diabetes was significantly reduced. The study also shows that a diet rich in fat and antioxidants from fish and other seafood, fruit and vegetables is beneficial for your health and is thus an important part of a healthy diet.

