

Effects of Diet and Nutrition on Pediatric Multiple Sclerosis

Intake of dairy, total fat, and saturated fat was associated with more relapses, whereas fruit, vegetable, and fiber intake were associated with fewer relapses.

Previous studies have suggested a favorable effect of healthy eating on multiple sclerosis (MS) outcomes. This prospective, multicenter study included 353 patients (32% non-white) aged 18 years or younger. Participants completed the food frequency questionnaire.

Mean follow-up was 3.9 years. After adjustment for baseline characteristics, intake of dairy of at least 50% more than the recommended amount and increasing intake of total and saturated fats were associated with a 41% higher risk for clinical relapse. T2 MRI data confirmed the association with excess dairy intake. Intake of fruits, vegetables, and fiber above the recommended amount was associated with lower risk for relapse.

COMMENT

This well-performed study provides valuable information and additional evidence for healthy eating to limit MS disease activity. The negative effect of dairy requires additional study and confirmation, as these remain excellent natural sources of much needed calcium and vitamin D. For children with MS, we can at least recommend a diet low in fat with plenty of fruits, vegetables, and grains.

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