

Just the trans fats, ma'am

By ACSH Staff — March 2, 2012

Do trans fats increase stroke risk? A new [study](#) [1] in the *Annals of Neurology* seems to suggest that they do, at least among postmenopausal women. But ACSH's Dr. Ruth Kava thinks that the data just don't hold up. Food frequency questionnaires, the method used in this study to assess participants' diets, are not the most accurate way to figure out what people eat, she notes. It would be difficult to determine trans fat consumption from this type of survey.

In the current study, researchers led by Dr. Ka He of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Global Public Health analyzed data from over 87,000 postmenopausal women, all of whom had participated in the Women's Health Initiative Observational Study. They assessed more than 1,000 women who had strokes, and correlated these cases with participants' diets. And, while there was no association between total fat or cholesterol intake and stroke, the researchers [noted a correspondence](#) [2] between trans fat in the diet and stroke risk. According to their measurements, the more trans fats the participants consumed, the more likely they were to have a stroke; those who ate the most trans fats appeared to have a 39 percent higher stroke risk than those who ate the least. Yet the study also suggested that women taking aspirin did not have an increased stroke risk, no matter what level of trans fats they consumed.

The researchers also found that the association between trans fats and stroke was lessened somewhat when they controlled for variables such as fruit and vegetable consumption, socioeconomic factors, and smoking. According to ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross, this suggests that a variety of confounding factors may have played a significant role in creating this association. This study should not alarm older women into making drastic changes to their diets, he says. He points readers to the ACSH publication [Trans Fatty Acids and Heart Disease](#) [3], which analyzed the body of scientific evidence on the topic and found that reducing trans fat intake is not associated with beneficial cardiovascular health effects.

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2012/03/02/just-trans-fats-maam>

Links

[1] <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ana.23555/abstract>

[2] <http://www.medpagetoday.com/Cardiology/Strokes/31434>

[3] <http://acsh.org/2006/10/trans-fatty-acids-and-heart-disease/>