

A better way to avoid heart attacks: Avoid misleading studies!

By ACSH Staff — July 24, 2013



[1] Getty Images

Medical News Today urged readers not to skip breakfast in their article [Eat breakfast to improve your heart health](#) [2], published yesterday. While it seems like sound advice at first glance, when digging a bit deeper it seems that the evidence for such a claim isn't all there.

Here at ACSH, we have nothing against an egg sandwich or bowl of cereal, but we do have a problem with misleading headlines and studies. The study in question was done by a team from the Harvard School of Public Health.

They collected information on food choices from male physicians over the course of 16 years, and attempted (retrospectively) to make correlations between numerous dietary factors and numerous health outcomes. Of the 26,902 men between the ages of 42 and 82 years, 1,572 of them experienced non-fatal heart attacks or died of coronary heart disease.

The researchers found that there was a 27% higher risk of heart attack or death from coronary heart disease for men who did not eat breakfast, which led them to conclude that when you eat is just as important for health as what and how much you eat, according to the analysis of the study published by *Medical News Today*.

While there may be a significant correlation between men who skipped breakfast, and heart issues, there of course is no evidence to suggest that skipping breakfast causes such problems. In fact, the researchers went on to say that men who skipped breakfast also had other risk factors. These men tended to be younger and single, and had a higher fraction of smokers. The breakfast-skippers also worked longer hours, exercised less and drank more alcohol. In fact, when results were adjusted to eliminate factors such as body mass index, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes, there was no significant link between eating breakfast and heart health at all.

We're not telling you to skip breakfast, but this study does not prove that skipping breakfast will give you a heart attack.

ACSH's Dr. Ruth Kava added this comment: This is yet another example of the way the several different huge databases of the Harvard School of Public Health have been used for the nefarious

business of data dredging. This fallacious epidemiological tactic analyzes many inputs and outcomes and retrospectively tries to assign some association when the magical statistical significance is discovered. My advice: don't buy it, enjoy your Wheaties or french toast, or not.

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[2] <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/263775.php>