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**Short-term studies suggest that wholegrain oats may
reduce risk factors for coronary heart disease**

Trials lasting 4 to 8 weeks indicate that including wholegrain oats in your diet may lower total and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol.

Coronary heart disease (CHD) is a major cause of death and ill health. One of the risk factors for CHD is elevated blood levels of total cholesterol and of low density lipoprotein cholesterol. Existing observational studies indicate that wholegrain cereals may reduce the risk of CHD, possibly by reducing cholesterol levels.

A Cochrane Systematic Review identified ten trials that assessed the effect of giving wholegrain foods to adults. Of these studies, eight used wholegrain oats. The trials involved a total of 914 adults who had at least one major risk factor for CHD. All were short-term studies lasting only 4 to 8 weeks and involved small numbers of people; most were wholly or partly funded by companies that had interest in cereal products.

“Well-designed, adequately powered studies are now needed to evaluate the effects of long-term consumption of oats,” says Dr Sarah Kelly of the School of Health and Social Care at the University of Teesside, Middlesbrough.

The review concluded that there is enough evidence from wholegrain oats to suggest that healthcare professionals could recommend oats as part of cholesterol reduction programmes.

The Researchers also point to an inconsistency in the use of the term ‘wholegrain’.

“Some reviews of wholegrain products include studies conducted with dietary fibre or oat bran and have referred to these refined products as wholegrain. There is a need for greater clarity and consistency between the terms wholegrain, bran, germ and fibre in published research”.

- Ends -

Notes for editors

1. Kelly SAM, Summerbell CD, Brynes A, Whittaker V, Frost G. Wholegrain cereals for coronary heart disease. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2007, Issue 2. Art. No.: CD005051. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD005051.pub2.
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^a Jadad AR, Cook DJ, Jones A, Klassen TP, Tugwell P, Moher M, et al. Methodology and reports of systematic Reviews and meta-analyses: a comparison of Cochrane Reviews with articles published in paper-based journal.