

Abstract

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Omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid intake and islet autoimmunity in children at increased risk for type 1 diabetes.

Norris JM, Yin X, Lamb MM, Barriga K, Seifert J, Hoffman M, Orton HD, Barón AE, Clare-Salzler M, Chase HP, Szabo NJ, Erlich H, Eisenbarth GS, Rewers M.

Department of Preventive Medicine and Biostatistics, University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, Denver, CO 80262, USA

CONTEXT: Cod liver oil supplements in infancy have been associated with a decreased risk of type 1 diabetes mellitus in a retrospective study.

OBJECTIVE: To examine whether intakes of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids are associated with the development of islet autoimmunity (IA) in children.

DESIGN, SETTING, AND PARTICIPANTS: A longitudinal, observational study, the Diabetes Autoimmunity Study in the Young (DAISY), conducted in Denver, Colorado, between January 1994 and November 2006, of 1770 children at increased risk for type 1 diabetes, defined as either possession of a high diabetes risk HLA genotype or having a sibling or parent with type 1 diabetes. The mean age at follow-up was 6.2 years. Islet autoimmunity was assessed in association with reported dietary intake of polyunsaturated fatty acids starting at age 1 year. A case-cohort study (N = 244) was also conducted in which risk of IA by polyunsaturated fatty acid content of erythrocyte membranes (as a percentage of total lipids) was examined. **MAIN**

OUTCOME MEASURE: Risk of IA, defined as being positive for insulin, glutamic acid decarboxylase, or insulinoma-associated antigen-2 autoantibodies on 2 consecutive visits and still autoantibody positive or having diabetes at last follow-up visit.

RESULTS: Fifty-eight children developed IA. Adjusting for HLA genotype, family history of type 1 diabetes, caloric intake, and omega-6 fatty acid intake, **omega-3 fatty acid intake was inversely associated with risk of IA** (hazard ratio [HR], 0.45; 95% confidence interval [CI], 0.21-0.96; P = .04). The association was strengthened when the definition of the outcome was limited to those positive for 2 or more autoantibodies (HR, 0.23; 95% CI, 0.09-0.58; P = .002). **In the case-cohort study, omega-3 fatty acid content of erythrocyte membranes was also inversely associated with IA risk** (HR, 0.63; 95% CI, 0.41-0.96; P = .03).

CONCLUSION: **Dietary intake of omega-3 fatty acids is associated with reduced risk of IA in children at increased genetic risk for type 1 diabetes.**

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