

Giving children a diet rich in fish and "fruity vegetables" can reduce asthma and allergies, according to a seven-year study of 460 Spanish children.

Researchers followed the progress of the children, on the Spanish island of Menorca, at regular intervals from before they were born until they were six-and-a-half.ⁱ

They discovered that children who consumed more than 40 grams of "fruity vegetables" a day -- namely tomatoes, eggplants (aubergines), cucumber, green beans and zucchini (courgettes) - were much less likely to suffer from childhood asthma. However, the researchers noted that the dietary effects were quite specific and that other fruits and vegetables examined did not provide the same protective effect.

Nor did other food groups included in the study, such as dairy products, meat, poultry and bread. The mothers of 232 boys and 228 girls, who had been recruited during antenatal classes, completed detailed questionnaires on their children's health, weight, diet and any breathing problems every year until their child was six-and-a-half.

90 per cent of the children also underwent allergy testing -- skin prick tests were used to check their response to the six most common allergens.

"After adjusting the results for a wide range of variables, we concluded that the link between symptom-free children and a diet rich in fruity vegetables and fish was statistically significant" says Dr Chatzi.

Webmd looks at the problem from the inverse-American diets have continued to cut out fruits and vegetables and the incidence of asthma has been on the increase. WebMd states several research studies have suggested this, and others are ongoing.

There's evidence that people who eat diets higher in vitamins C and E, beta-carotene, flavonoids, magnesium, selenium, and omega-3 fatty acids have lower rates of asthma. Many of these substances are antioxidants, which protect cells from damage.

One recent study of asthma and diet showed that teens with poor nutrition were more likely to have asthma symptoms. Those who didn't get enough fruits and foods with vitamins C and E and omega-3 fatty acids were the most likely to have poor lung function.

However, it's not at all clear that deficiencies of these nutrients actually caused the asthma. And studies that have used specific vitamins and minerals to treat asthma have been unsuccessful. Why? Some researchers think that it might be the interaction of different vitamins, minerals, and other antioxidants that naturally occur in foods that have the health benefits. Therefore, it's unlikely that taking vitamins, minerals, or other food supplements will improve asthma control and prevent symptoms of asthma.ⁱⁱ

Instead, people need to eat the vitamins intact in the plant based foods that carry them.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ Reference: "Diet, wheeze and atopy in school children in Menorca, Spain." Chatzi et al. Pediatric Allergy and Immunology. 18, pages 480 to 485. (September 2007).

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/09/070911092113.htm>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.webmd.com/asthma/guide/asthma-diet-what-you-should-know>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.drmcDougall.com/med_hot_supplements.html