

Diets higher in dairy foods, fruits and vegetables may stem rising numbers of hypertensive children

-- Study the first to look at the effects of food intake on blood pressure in children --

December, 2004 – A new study published last week in *Epidemiology* showed that children who consistently eat more servings of dairy foods, fruits and vegetables had the lowest blood pressure levels over time. Conversely, those who ate the least amount of dairy foods, fruits and vegetables had the highest blood pressure levels over time. This study is the first to analyze the effect of food intake on blood pressure levels in children, and with more than 15 percent of school-aged children diagnosed as overweight and obese, the risk of developing chronic diseases including diabetes and high blood pressure increases significantly.

The researchers were interested in learning if the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet developed by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI), a lowfat diet rich in dairy foods, fruits and vegetables, would be as effective in children as it is in adults in lowering blood pressure. The study looked at data from the Framingham Children's Study, which followed dietary and health patterns of 95 families for eight years. The children were three-to-six years of age at the start of the study, and the results indicated that children who naturally ate a diet similar to DASH had better overall blood pressure.

“The findings from this study support the idea that establishing a healthy eating plan that includes dairy, fruits and vegetables, as early as preschool may have long-term health benefits,” said Lynn L. Moore, D.Sc., associate professor of medicine at Boston University School of Medicine. “Children with lower blood pressures in adolescence are less likely to develop hypertension as young adults. Parents who promote a family dietary pattern that is rich in fruits, vegetables, and dairy products may lower their own blood pressures and reduce the risk of future hypertension for their children.”

New blood pressure guidelines for children set by NHLBI, published as a recent supplement to the journal *Pediatrics*, brought to light the strong correlation between childhood obesity and the incidence of hypertension within that population, and earmarked childhood hypertension as a significant health issue.

- Moore, L, et al. *Epidemiology* (Issue 1, Vol. 16, pg. 4-11)
- National High Blood Pressure Education Program Working Group on High Blood Pressure in Children and Adolescents. The fourth report on the diagnosis, evaluation, and treatment of high blood pressure in children and adolescents. *Pediatrics*.2004;114(2): 555-576S
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute 2004.