Unhealthy diet as a risk factor for chronic disease

Introduction

The questions in this module measure:

- Fruit and vegetable consumption
- Type of oil or fat used for cooking

Research findings

Some research findings related to unhealthy diet are as follows:

- Overall, 2.7 million lives could potentially be saved each year worldwide if fruit and vegetable consumption were increased.\(^1\)
- 26.7 million (1.8\%) DALYs worldwide are attributable to low fruit and vegetable intake.\(^2\)
- Of the burden attributable to low fruit and vegetable intake, about 85\% was from cardiovascular diseases and 15\% from cancers.\(^2\)
- Low intake of fruits and vegetables is estimated to cause about 19\% of gastrointestinal cancer, 31\% of ischemic heart disease and 11\% of stroke worldwide.\(^2\)
- The consumption of at least 400g of fruit and vegetables per day is recommended as a population intake goal, to prevent diet-related chronic diseases.\(^3\)
- Adequate consumption of fruit and vegetables reduces the risk for cardiovascular diseases\(^3\), stomach cancer\(^4\) and colorectal cancer.\(^3\)
- There is convincing evidence that high intake of high-energy foods such as processed foods high in fats and sugars promote obesity compared to low-energy foods such as fruits and vegetables.\(^3\)
- Higher unsaturated fatty acids from vegetable sources and polyunsaturated fatty acids have been associated with a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes.\(^5,6\) Replacement of saturated and trans fatty acids by polyunsaturated vegetable oils lower coronary heart disease risk.\(^7\)
- Partial hydrogenation to increase the shelf life of poly unsaturated fatty acids creates trans fatty acids.\(^3\) Trans fatty acids increase the risk of coronary heart disease and render the plasma lipid profile even more atherogenic than saturated fatty acids by elevating LDL cholesterol and decreasing HDL cholesterol.\(^8\)

Reference