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Canola and High-Oleic Canola Oils Reduce Belly Fat in Adults U.S.-Canadian Clinical Trial Shows Canola Oils Benefit Waist and Heart

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA – Canola and high-oleic canola oils can lower abdominal fat when used in place of other selected oil blends in a heart-healthy diet for weight maintenance, according to research presented at the American Heart Association’s EPI/NPAM 2013 Scientific Sessions in New Orleans on March 21. The study of American and Canadian adults at risk for metabolic syndrome shows that consuming certain vegetable oils may be a simple way of reducing their risk of this medical condition, which affects about one in three U.S. adults and one in five Canadian adults.

In the multicenter, randomized, controlled trial, 121 participants at risk for metabolic syndrome – a group of five risk factors characterized by increased belly fat, low “good” HDL cholesterol and above average blood sugar, blood pressure and triglycerides that increase the risk of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes – were all given a weight maintenance, heart-healthy diet with a daily smoothie containing one of five study oils. This process was repeated for the remaining four oils.

Results showed that those who consumed canola or high-oleic canola oils on a daily basis for four weeks lowered their belly fat by 1.6 percent. Abdominal fat was unchanged by the other three oils, which included a flax/safflower oil blend, corn/safflower oil blend and high-oleic canola oil enriched with an algal source of the omega-3 DHA. Both the flax/safflower and corn/safflower oil blends were low in monounsaturated fat.

“Monounsaturated fat appears to be responsible for these benefits,” says Penny Kris-Etherton, Ph.D., R.D., professor of nutrition at the Pennsylvania State University and one of the lead researchers. “Reducing abdominal fat is one way that dietary MUFA may decrease metabolic syndrome risk factors.”

According to the American Heart Association, many of the factors that contribute to metabolic syndrome can be addressed by a healthy diet, exercise and weight loss, which can significantly reduce health risks of this condition.

“It is evident that further studies are needed to determine the mechanisms that account for belly fat loss on a high-MUFA diet,” notes Kris-Etherton. “The Canola Oil Multicentre Intervention Trial (COMIT) indicates that simple dietary changes, such as using a high-MUFA vegetable oil, may reduce the risk of metabolic syndrome and therefore, heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes.”

The COMIT was led by the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, in collaboration with Pennsylvania State University, Laval University in Quebec and the University of Toronto. It was funded by the Government of Canada, Canola Council of Canada and Dow AgroSciences.

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