Optimal Cardiovascular Health Linked to Lower NAFLD Prevalence

The Life's Simple 7 metric accurately indicates the likelihood of having fatty liver disease.

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An ideal cardiovascular score, as determined by the Life's Simple 7 principle, was linked to a lower prevalence of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), according to findings published in The American Journal of Medicine.

Arising from the accumulation of fat in the liver, NAFLD and its more severe form, non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), are responsible for a growing proportion of advanced liver disease worldwide. As a result of inflammation, NAFLD can lead to the buildup of scar tissue (fibrosis), cirrhosis and even liver cancer. With no effective approved medical therapies, disease management is dependent on lifestyle changes, such as weight loss and exercise.

According to the American Heart Association, Life's Simple 7 is a set of seven cardiovascular risk factors that can be improved through lifestyle changes. Since NAFLD is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease, Ebenezer Oni, MD, MPH, of the Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia, and colleagues set out to clarify any links between the Life's Simple 7 measure and NAFLD.

The team studied participants from the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis cohort, assessing cardiovascular health scores using Life's Simple 7 measures. A value between 0 and 8 was considered inadequate, between 9 and 10 average and between 11 and 14 optimal.

Of 3,901 participants, 747 (19%) had ideal cardiovascular health, 1,270 (33%) were in the average range and 1,884 (48%) had inadequate values. White individuals were most likely to have an optimal score (51%), while Black participants were least likely (16%).

Across the study population, NAFLD prevalence was 18%, but this differed according to Life's Simple 7 score: 7% in the optimal range, 14% in the average range and 25% in the inadequate range had NAFLD. After adjusting for other risk factors, people with average and optimal scores had lower odds of NAFLD (0.44 and 0.19, respectively) in comparison with people who had inadequate scores. This association was similar for different genders, races and ages.

"A more favorable cardiovascular health score was associated with a lower prevalence of NAFLD,"

wrote the researchers. “This study may suggest a potential of Life’s Simple 7 in the prevention of liver disease.”

Click here to read the study abstract in The American Journal of Medicine.

Click here to learn more about NAFLD and NASH.

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