



Photo: Gunnar Menander

Dietary strategies to combat lifestyle-related diseases

The composition of people's diet affects their risk of developing serious common diseases such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases and type 2 diabetes. Although the connection is well-known, few investments are made into combating ill health related to bad dietary habits. The Food for Health initiative aims to increase knowledge about the connection between the quality of a person's diet and these common diseases by gathering world-leading expertise from different research fields – and asking new research questions.

DISEASE-PREVENTING DIET

The Food for Health initiative at Lund University aims to map the significance of various food characteristics for the prevention of diet-related diseases. The focus is on obesity and type 2 diabetes which, like cardiovascular diseases, are increasing exponentially all over the world. In 2030, 550 million people are expected to have type 2 diabetes, compared to around 370 million today.

In 2013, Lund University established a research laboratory at Medicon Village to study the health effects of food. This provides completely new opportunities to make food and meals available for well-controlled studies of nutrition on healthy volunteers and constitutes the basis for the University's future investment in the research field.

NEW RESEARCH FIELDS

By supporting our investment, you are contributing to increased knowledge within an urgent field of research. The project is unique from an international perspective as it takes a multi-disciplinary approach to partially unexplored research fields.

"Anti-inflammatory" foods

Certain foods seem to reduce inflammation, which is an important risk factor for cardio-vascular diseases. This offers major opportunities to identify suitable foods. New knowledge indicates that the composition of microflora in the gut has an effect on inflammation. Certain foods have an effect on intestinal flora, opening up entirely new possibilities for the development of disease-preventing foods.

The interaction between food and the brain

The composition of food can affect the release of hormones that contribute to a feeling of satiety. In-depth studies will provide valuable knowledge regarding the ability of specific food components to communicate satiety to the brain. Foods which reduce the risk of diabetes and cardio-vascular disease also improve concentration and working memory. This research field is new and can provide important information on the individual's chances of better exploiting his or her full intellectual potential through food choices.

PILOT STUDY OF DISEASE-PREVENTING DIET

Based on knowledge from the two research fields just mentioned, new food compositions are being identified for a follow-up dietary study on healthy volunteers in which disease-preventing potential is evaluated, along with the effects of food on concentration and working memory in healthy individuals. All together, the research is expected to provide unique and valuable information to support the planning of further dietary studies with the aim of preventing obesity and related diseases in the population.

FUNDING

We are funded by Lund University, the regional council of Skåne, enterprises and research foundations. However, to take the research even further, more knowledge is needed to establish causal relationship between specific food characteristics and benefits on health parameters. Such knowledge provides valuable tools in food and meal formulation.

All donations are welcome, whether large or small. Together we can work for a better world!

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