

## USDA: Cooling Inflammation for Healthier Arteries

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Agricultural Research Service (ARS)-funded scientists have reported new reasons for choosing "heart-healthy" oats at the grocery store.

Nutritionist Mohsen Meydani, director of the Vascular Biology Laboratory at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University in Boston, Mass., led the research on the oat compounds, called avenanthramides. Meydani previously has shown that phenolic antioxidants in oats obstruct the ability of blood cells to stick to artery walls.

Chronic inflammation inside the arterial wall is part of the process that eventually leads to a disorder known as atherosclerosis. Meydani and colleagues have reported findings that suggest the avenanthramides of oats decrease the expression of inflammatory molecules. The study showed that forms of avenanthramides possess potential anti-inflammatory properties through inhibiting factors that are linked with activating proinflammatory cytokines.

Cytokines are small proteins released by cells while seeking to protect and repair tissue. Some trigger inflammation, for example, while responding to infection. Inhibiting inflammation through diet, drugs, or key nutrients is considered to be of great benefit in preventing atherosclerosis. Details of this study can be found in the scientific journal *Free Radical Biology & Medicine*.

The study provides additional indications of the potential health benefit of oat consumption in the prevention of coronary heart disease beyond its known effect through lowering blood cholesterol.

Read more about this research in the February 2010 issue of *Agricultural Research* magazine, available online at:  
<http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/AR/archive/feb10/cell0210.htm>.

ARS is the principal intramural scientific research agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The research supports the USDA priority of improving nutrition and health.

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