

STUDY NOT A GREEN LIGHT FOR FAT CONSUMPTION

Bold headlines raised eyebrows across the country when *The Journal of the American Medical Association* recently published a major study that found a low-fat diet had no significant effect in reducing the risk of heart disease. The Women's Health Initiative Dietary Modification Trial followed nearly 49,000 women ages 50 to 79, half of whom were assigned to follow a low-fat diet for eight years.

"I think everybody was surprised by the results of this study, but there are several issues to consider before you reach for the butter dish," said Reynolds Delgado, M.D., cardiologist and medical director of Mechanical Support Devices in Heart Failure at the Texas Heart Institute at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital. "First of all, most of the women in the diet arm of the study were asked to limit fat intake to just 20 percent of their diet and the majority failed to reach that target. Both groups consumed about the same amount of calories and the majority of these women were overweight or obese, which obviously is a risk for heart disease in itself."

The federal government's food guide pyramid, revised last year, recommends a diet rich in fruit and vegetables, whole grains and limited use of healthy fats such as olive oil.



"Above all, it's important to remember that diet is not the sole factor in heart health. Our genes certainly play a role but everyone can benefit from a lifestyle that includes controlling weight and getting regular exercise," said Dr. Delgado. ♥