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**Early-life diet and risk of inflammatory bowel disease**

Guo A, Ludvigsson J, Brantsæter A, et al. [Early-life diet and risk of inflammatory bowel disease: a pooled study in two Scandinavian birth cohorts](https://gut.bmj.com/content/early/2024/01/02/gutjnl-2023-330971). Gut 2024; doi: 10.1136/gutjnl-2023-330971.

The global incidence of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), encompassing Crohn's disease (CD) and ulcerative colitis (UC), is on the rise. Population-based studies indicate that a diet rich in ultra-processed foods, sugar, red meat, and fat elevates the risk of IBD, while a diet high in fruits, vegetables, and fish is associated with a decreased risk. However, there is limited data on the impact of early childhood diet on IBD risk.

This prospective study, led by Guo et al., in Sweden, aimed to explore the link between early-life diet quality, the frequency of specific food groups, and later IBD risk. The researchers conducted a detailed analysis of dietary questionnaires completed at 1 and 3 years of age as part of the All Babies in Southeast Sweden (ABIS) and The Norwegian Mother, Father, and Child Cohort (MoBa) Studies. Diet quality was assessed using a modified version of the Healthy Eating Index (HEI) tailored for measuring children's diets. The diagnosis of IBD within the cohorts was obtained from national patient registers. A total of 81,280 individuals followed over 130,433 person-years. Of these, 307 individuals were diagnosed with IBD (131 CD, 97 UC, and 79 IBD-U (IBD unclassified)), resulting in an incidence rate of 32 per 100,000 person-years in ABIS and 22 per 100,000 person-years in MoBa. The study findings revealed that a high-quality diet at the age of 1 year, compared to a low-quality diet, was associated with a reduced risk of IBD (pooled adjusted hazard ratio [aHR] 0.75; 95% CI=0.58 to 0.98). Similarly, a high intake of fish (pooled aHR CD: 0.70; 95% CI=0.49 to 1.00 and UC: aHR=0.46; 95% CI=0.21, 0.99) and vegetables reduced the risk of developing IBD later in life. Conversely, a high intake of sugar-sweetened beverages increased the risk of IBD.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the importance of dietary habits in early life in influencing the risk of IBD. High intake of fish and vegetables during early childhood appears to be protective against IBD, while a diet rich in sugar-sweetened beverages increases the risk. These findings underscore the need for public health strategies promoting healthy dietary practices from a young age to mitigate the rising global incidence of IBD.