

ORIGINAL INVESTIGATIONS

# The Importance of Breakfast in Atherosclerosis Disease

## Insights From the PESA Study



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### ABSTRACT

**BACKGROUND** Daily habits, including the number and quality of eating occasions, are potential targets for primary prevention strategies with large health impacts. Skipping breakfast is considered a frequent and unhealthy habit associated with an increased cardiovascular (CV) risk.

**OBJECTIVES** The study sought to explore the association between different breakfast patterns and CV risk factors and the presence, distribution, and extension of subclinical atherosclerosis.

**METHODS** Cross-sectional analysis was performed within the PESA (Progression of Early Subclinical Atherosclerosis) study, a prospective cohort of asymptomatic (free of CV events at baseline) adults 40 to 54 years of age. Lifestyle and multivascular imaging data along with clinical covariates were collected from 4,052 participants. Multivariate logistic regression models were used in the analysis.

**RESULTS** Three patterns of breakfast consumption were studied: high-energy breakfast, when contributing to >20% of total daily energy intake (27% of the population); low-energy breakfast, when contributing between 5% and 20% of total daily energy intake (70% of the population); and skipping breakfast, when consuming <5% of total daily energy (3% of the population). Independent of the presence of traditional and dietary CV risk factors, and compared with high-energy breakfast, habitual skipping breakfast was associated with a higher prevalence of noncoronary (odds ratio: 1.55; 95% confidence interval: 0.97 to 2.46) and generalized (odds ratio: 2.57; 95% confidence interval: 1.54 to 4.31) atherosclerosis.

**CONCLUSION** Skipping breakfast is associated with an increased odds of prevalent noncoronary and generalized atherosclerosis independently of the presence of conventional CV risk factors. (Progression of Early Subclinical Atherosclerosis [PESA]; [NCT01410318](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jacc.2017.08.027)) (J Am Coll Cardiol 2017;70:1833-42) © 2017 by the American College of Cardiology Foundation.



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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>BMI</b>	= body mass index
<b>CAC</b>	= coronary artery calcium
<b>CI</b>	= confidence interval
<b>CVD</b>	= cardiovascular disease
<b>EI</b>	= energy intake
<b>HBF</b>	= high-energy breakfast
<b>LBF</b>	= low-energy breakfast
<b>MetS</b>	= metabolic syndrome
<b>OR</b>	= odds ratio
<b>SBF</b>	= skipping breakfast
<b>WC</b>	= waist circumference

Several conditions associated with the development of cardiovascular disease (CVD) such as diabetes (1), obesity (2), hypertension (3), and dyslipidemia (4) are known to be modifiable by changes in lifestyle. Among lifestyle factors, our diet, including both the nutritional quality and our acquired eating patterns, constitutes a major target of CVD prevention strategies.

Eating patterns are highly dependent on cultural, social and psychological determinants, as people integrate them into their daily life routines. A particular habit that might have a significant effect on CV health is breakfast consumption, as it is associated with factors such as satiety (5), daily energy intake (EI) (6), metabolic efficiency of the diet, and appetite regulation (7). A number of studies have reported associations between the habit of omitting breakfast and increased cardiometabolic health markers (8), including obesity (9), diabetes (10), and unfavorable lipid profile (11). Although there are some studies linking skipping breakfast with coronary heart disease risk (12,13), to the best of our knowledge, no studies have investigated the association with this dietary habit on the presence of subclinical atherosclerosis. The aim of our study was to characterize the association between different breakfast patterns and CVD risk factors, and in particular, whether regularly skipping breakfast is associated with subclinical atherosclerosis, by investigating the presence of atherosclerotic plaques in the carotid arteries, aorta, and iliofemoral arteries or coronary artery calcium, in a population with no previous history of CVD.

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## METHODS

**STUDY OVERVIEW.** The PESA (Progression of Early Subclinical Atherosclerosis) study is an ongoing observational prospective cohort of 4,082 employees of the Bank Santander Headquarters in Madrid, Spain, aiming to discover the factors related to the development and progression of atherosclerosis. A detailed description of the study design and procedures of data collection has been reported elsewhere (14). The study protocol was approved by the Ethic committee of Instituto de Salud Carlos III (Madrid, Spain). All participants provided written informed consent (14).

**STUDY PARTICIPANTS.** Male and female volunteers 40 to 54 years of age were included in the study if at baseline they were free of any CV or chronic kidney disease, were not under active treatment for cancer, did not have previous transplant, did not exceed body mass index (BMI) of 40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, and did not have any disease that might affect life expectancy and decrease it to <6 years. Of the initial participants, 26 having missing values in some of the variables of interest, and 4 reporting extreme values for daily EI (<800 or >4,200 kcal for men, and <500 or >3,500 kcal for women) (15) were excluded from the analyses. The final sample consisted therefore of 4,052 participants.

**DIETARY ASSESSMENT.** To estimate usual diet of PESA study participants we used a computerized questionnaire (dietary history of the ENRICA [Estudio de Nutrición y Riesgo Cardiovascular] study) developed and validated for the Spanish population within the ENRICA study (16) containing nutritional information on 861 food items (including 184 typically consumed Spanish meals and dishes). Briefly, subjects were asked to report foods consumed in the past 15 days, taking into consideration eating occasions (waking up, breakfast, midmorning, lunch, mid-afternoon, and dinner). Once a food item was consumed at least once, it was considered “usually consumed.” Conversion factors were used to calculate the annual frequency of consumption (16). Based on these data, the variable “energy consumed during breakfast” was computed and the breakfast patterns in our study was based on the percentage of the daily total EI consumed at breakfast. As a first step, our definition of breakfast was based on quantitative description provided by Timlin and Pereira (7), where it is defined as “the first meal of the day that breaks the fast after the longest period of sleep, eaten before or at the start of daily activities (e.g., errands, travel, work), within 2 h of waking, typically no later than 10:00 in the morning, and of an energy level between 20 and 35% of total daily energy need.” Based on this definition, we identified foods consumed before 10:00 AM in the PESA study database and those participants whose energy intake at breakfast exceeded 20% of total energy intake, were considered breakfast consumers (high-energy breakfast [HBF]). As a second step, we applied the qualitative definition of breakfast provided by O’Neil et al. (17), where

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