



Dietary supplements for men:

Can I protect myself against cardiovascular disease with selenium?



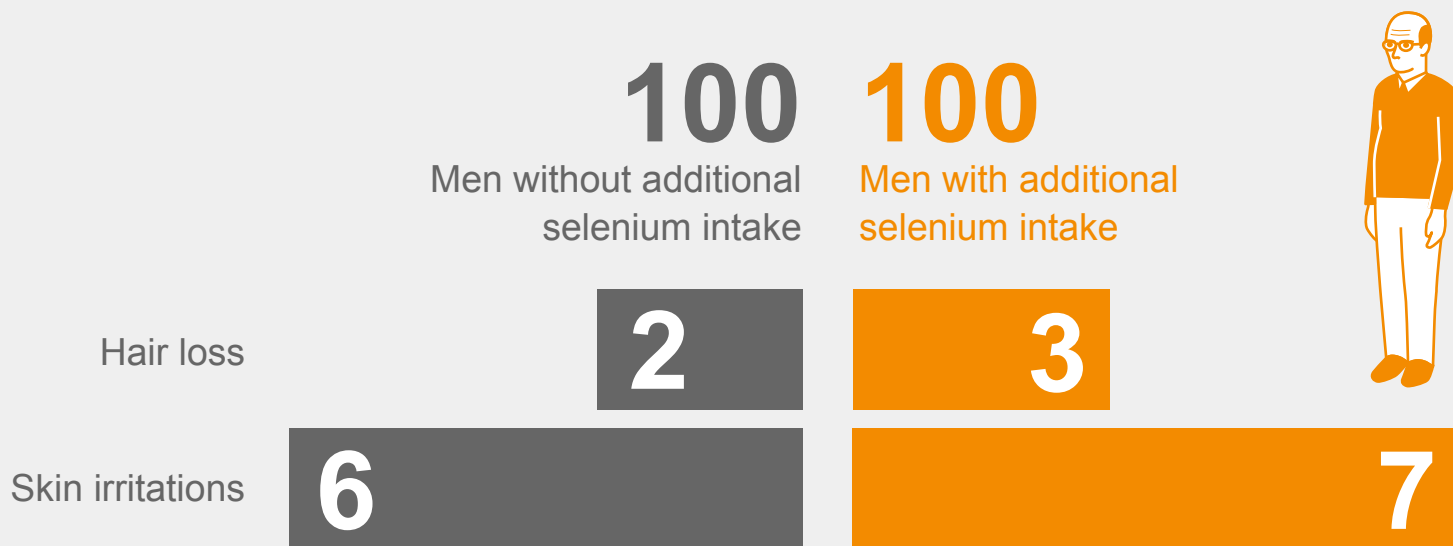
No benefit: Selenium as a dietary supplement does not prevent any cardiovascular diseases.

	without additional selenium intake	with additional selenium intake
Men	per 100	per 100
Cardiovascular incidents	12	12
Non-fatal strokes	1	1
Deaths due to cardiovascular diseases	1–2	1–2

Explanations and sources



Side effects: Selenium as a dietary supplement can lead to hair loss and skin irritations.



⚠ Due to evidence of a link with Type 2 diabetes, a selenium study was discontinued as a precaution in 2008.

Explanations and sources

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Selenium is a trace element found, for example, in fish, meat and eggs. Among other things, it is important for the immune system and thyroid. Too little of it can trigger deficiency diseases, which are, however, rare in our latitudes. Selenium is sold freely as a dietary supplement and is taken, among other reasons, to prevent cardiovascular diseases. However, in the SELECT study, it was determined that an increased supply of selenium does not prevent any cardiovascular diseases.

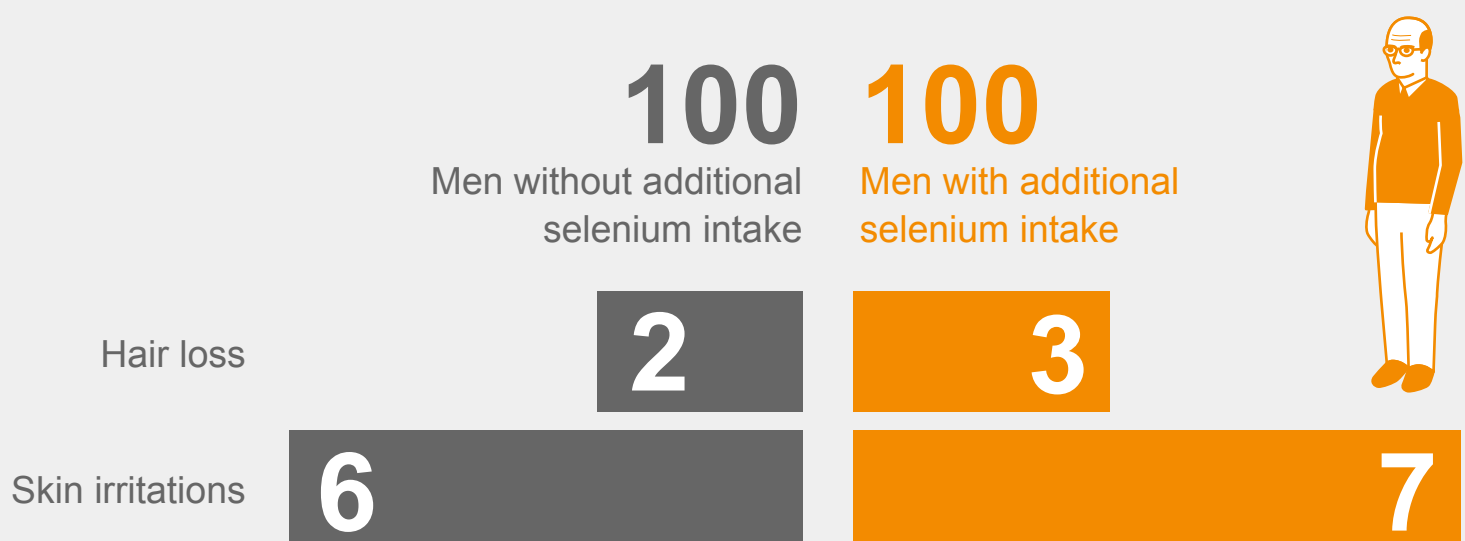
The figures in the table show that of 100 men aged 50 and over with normal blood pressure, 1 to 2 died of a cardiovascular disease within 4 to 7 years independent of additional selenium intake. The total mortality rate remained the same in both groups (4 in 100; not displayed in the table), as did the number of non-fatal haemorrhagic, ischaemic and unqualified strokes (1 in 100) and the number of all cardiovascular incidents in total (12 in 100). The cardiovascular incidents refer to conditions such as heart attacks, strokes or acute coronary syndrome.

Beyond their natural selenium intake from foods, the men in the selenium group took an additional 200 micrograms of L-selenomethionine daily. The data are rounded.

Source: The data is based on the SELECT study: Lippman et al. (2009). [Journal of the American Medical Association](#), 301, pp 39–51.



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In the SELECT study, 17,800 men were examined in two groups on the impact of supplementary selenium intake. Hair loss was observed in 3 of 100 men with additional selenium intake and in 2 of 100 men without selenium intake. 7 of 100 men with additional selenium intake suffered mild to moderate skin irritations, compared to only 6 of 100 in the group without. Slightly more than 8 men with additional selenium intake developed Type 2 diabetes; this figure was less than 8 in the group without. Although this result might be coincidental, it points to an increased risk of diabetes through additional intake of selenium. In order to avoid potential harm to patients, the study was discontinued. The data are rounded.

Source: The data are based on the SELECT study: Lippman et al. (2009). [Journal of the American Medical Association](#), 301, pp 39–51.

Scientific development: Prof. Dr. med. A. Altiner, Director at the Institute for General Medical Science at the Rostock University School of Medicine.

The AOK, the federal association of health insurance funds, is developing its fact boxes together with Prof. Dr. Gerd Gigerenzer, director of the Harding Centre for Risk Literacy at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin.

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