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1 Effects of plant oils with different fatty acid composition on cardiovascular risk factors  
2 in moderately hypercholesteremic Chinese adults: a randomized, double-blinded,  
3 parallel-designed trial

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36

37 **Abbreviations:**38 ALA,  $\alpha$ -Linoleic acid;

39 AA, Arachidonic acid;

40 BMI, Body mass index;

41 hsCRP, high sensitivity C-reactive protein;

42 CVD, Cardiovascular disease;

43 DHA, Docosahexaenoic acid;

44 EPA, Eicosapentaenoic acid;

45 HOMA-IR, Homeostasis model assessment insulin resistance index;

46 LA, Linoleic acid;

47 MUFAs, Monounsaturated fatty acids;

48 PUFAs, Polyunsaturated fatty acids;

49 SFAs, Saturated fatty acids.

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56 **Abstract**

57 **Objectives:** Plant oil for cooking typically provides 40% to 50% of dietary fat, 65%  
58 of linoleic acid, 44% of  $\alpha$ -linolenic acid and 41% of oleic acid in the Chinese diet.  
59 However, the comparative effects of fatty acids derived from plant oil on cardiovascular  
60 risk factors in Chinese are still inconclusive. Hence, the aim of this study was to  
61 investigate whether cardiovascular risk factors are altered depending on various types  
62 of plant oil such as peanut oil rich in oleic acid, corn oil rich in linoleic acid, and blend  
63 oil fortified by  $\alpha$ -linolenic acid.

64 **Design:** A randomized, double-blinded, parallel-designed trial.

65 **Setting:** The First and the Second Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-sen University  
66 Guangzhou, China.

67 **Participants:** A total of 251 volunteers with fasting blood total cholesterol between  
68 5.13 and 8.00 mmol/L were enrolled.

69 **Intervention:** Volunteers received peanut oil, corn oil or blend oil to use for cooking  
70 for one year.

71 **Main outcome measures:** The erythrocyte membrane fatty acid composition, fasting  
72 plasma lipids, glucose and insulin concentrations and high sensitivity C-reactive protein  
73 (hsCRP) levels were measured before, during and after the intervention. The level of  $\alpha$ -  
74 linolenic acid in erythrocyte membrane was significantly increased in blend oil group  
75 after the intervention ( $P < 0.001$ ). The level of other fatty acids did not show any  
76 statistically significant differences between the three groups. No significant differences  
77 were observed in the concentrations of fasting plasma lipids, hsCRP, glucose, and

78 insulin among the three groups using different types of plant oil.

79 **Conclusions:** The results suggest that although ingesting cooking oil with different  
80 fatty acid composition for one year could change erythrocyte membrane fatty acid  
81 compositions, it did not significantly modify cardiovascular risk factors in moderately  
82 hypercholesteremic people.

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84

85 **Key words:**

86 plant oil, randomized double-blinded parallel-designed trial, cardiovascular risk factors,  
87 fatty acids

88

89 **Strength and limitations of this study:**

90 • This is a one-year, randomized, double-blinded, and parallel-designed trial to  
91 explore the effects of plant oil on cardiovascular risk factors in moderately  
92 hypercholesteremic Chinese adults.

93 • This trial could provide some clues for further long-term interventions using plant oil  
94 on CVD risk factors in the real world.

95 • Total dietary fatty acids, especially fatty acids derived from meat and other fat-rich  
96 food were not accurately assessed in the observed participants.

## 98 1. Introduction

99 Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the leading cause of death worldwide. The  
100 global mortality number attributed to CVDs was over 17.6 million in 2016 <sup>1</sup>. Among  
101 them, approximately 10 million deaths were attributed to 16 dietary risk factors such as  
102 diets high in red meat that are rich in saturated fatty acids (SFAs), diets low in  
103 polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs), and diets low in seafood n-3 fatty acids, etc. <sup>2</sup>. In  
104 order to prevent CVDs, many dietary guidelines recommend reducing the intake of total  
105 fat and replacing SFAs with unsaturated fats – preferentially polyunsaturated fats as the  
106 beneficial effects of monounsaturated fat on CVDs are of less paucity of evidence <sup>3-5</sup>.  
107 However, it is unclear which unsaturated fatty acids (UFAs) are preferred and where  
108 the best UFAs could be obtained from. Furthermore, it is also debatable whether the  
109 recommendations based on findings mainly from the developed countries could be  
110 applicable to the developing countries such as China, where both dietary and disease  
111 patterns have undergone rapid changes in the past several decades.

112 In China, the overall mortality attributed to CVDs increased from 2.6 million in  
113 1990 to 3.7 million in 2013<sup>6</sup>. Meanwhile, the energy contribution from fat intake  
114 increased from 12.0% in 1982 to 32.3% in 2012. Specifically, SFAs intake increased  
115 by 4.1% and PUFAs increased by 5.7% in total daily energy intake. <sup>7</sup>. Although some  
116 obvious improvements of several dietary factors in China have been observed in the  
117 past few decades, current dietary fat intake remain suboptimal, and poor diet quality is  
118 estimated to be responsible for a substantial proportion of CVD deaths in Chinese  
119 population.

120 In the Chinese diet 40-50% dietary fat is obtained from plant cooking oils. The  
121 average intake of plant oil per capita has increased from 9.6 g per day in 1982 to 33.8  
122 g per day in 2012 <sup>7</sup>. Plant oil provides 33% of SFAs, 65% of linoleic acid (LA), 44%  
123 of  $\alpha$ -linolenic acid (ALA), and 41% of oleic acid in daily diets according to the China  
124 Health and Nutrition Survey in 2011 <sup>8</sup>. The fatty acid proportions of plant oils vary  
125 greatly, which potentially impacts on CVD risk. The long-term relationships between  
126 dietary fat intake and risk of CVDs could be explained—at least partly—by the roles of  
127 dietary fatty acids in the development of CVDs <sup>9</sup>. It is well known that the biological  
128 reactivity of fatty acids is determined both by the length of the carbon chain, as well as  
129 the number and position of double bonds. SFAs are believed to increase low-density  
130 lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-c), which is a strong risk factor for CVDs <sup>10</sup>. From a  
131 combined result of different meta-analyses Schwingshackl et al. reported that there was  
132 a beneficial effect from the diets rich in monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFAs) on  
133 systolic and diastolic blood pressure as well as parameters of glycemetic control, however  
134 the impact of MUFAs on blood lipids is still controversial <sup>11</sup>. Plant-derived PUFAs are  
135 primarily LA, which is much prevalent than ALA in plant oils. Both ALA and LA lower  
136 LDL-c when replacing saturated fats. However, unlike LA, ALA may decrease high-  
137 density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL-c) concentrations <sup>12</sup>. A meta-analysis  
138 summarizing the results of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) indicated that  
139 increasing plant-derived n-6 PUFAs intake slightly reduced total cholesterol (TC) and  
140 probably decreased triglycerides (TG), with no obvious effects on HDL-c or LDL-c <sup>13</sup>.  
141 There is compelling evidence suggesting certain types of fatty acids are related to CVD



142 risk, however, the cardiovascular effects from plant-sourced cooking oils with different  
143 fatty acid profiles are still unclear.

144 Corn oil, containing 55% LA and 28% oleic acid, is viewed as “healthy” oil as it is  
145 rich in n-6 PUFA. Peanut oil, having 43% oleic acid and 34% LA, is the most popular  
146 plant oil in the Chinese diet for its special flavor. In addition, one type of blend oil  
147 contains extra 7% ALA by slightly replacing SFAs for balancing n-6 and n-3 fatty acid,  
148 which has similar fatty acid profile with peanut oil except for ALA. To date there is no  
149 consensus on the relationships of plant oils with different fatty acid composition and  
150 CVD risk. In this study, we conducted a one-year randomized, double-blinded, and  
151 parallel-designed trial to compare the effects from daily intake of these three plant oils  
152 with different ratios of SFA, MUFA, and PUFA (peanut oil vs corn oil), as well as  
153 different ratios of LA and ALA (peanut oil vs blend oil) on a series of risk factors of  
154 CVD among free living Chinese adults with moderate hypercholesterolemia <sup>14</sup>. The  
155 change in blood total cholesterol (TC) is the primary outcome and the secondary  
156 outcomes include change in low- and high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-c and  
157 HDL-c), change in weight, body mass index (BMI), waist circumference, systolic and  
158 diastolic blood pressure, fasting plasma glucose, insulin and high sensitivity C-reactive  
159 protein (hsCRP). The fatty acid composition of erythrocyte membrane was analyzed to  
160 assess the participants' compliance, and also to serve as biomarkers to explore the  
161 effects of long-term interventions of plant oils on the body's fatty acid composition.

## 162 2. Experimental Procedures

## 163 **2.1 Subjects**

164 Subjects aged from 40 to 65 years were recruited by sending invitation letters to  
165 residential buildings, posting advertisements on bulletin board, giving health talks in  
166 communities, and contacting patients in the nutrition clinic of the first and the second  
167 affiliated hospital of Sun Yat-sen university, Guangzhou, Guangdong province of  
168 China from December 2005 to April 2006. The subjects with a plasma total cholesterol  
169 (TC) concentration between 5.13 and 8.00 mmol/L and a fasting plasma glucose below  
170 6.11 mmol/L were included. Subjects with evidence of CVDs, diabetes mellitus, liver  
171 or other metabolic dysfunction, and mental disability were excluded. In addition,  
172 subjects taking any drugs known to affect plasma lipids in the past three months were  
173 also excluded. Among 739 original participants, a total of 251 subjects were finally  
174 enrolled. Of the total 155 were females and 96 were males. All participants signed the  
175 written informed consent prior to the enrollment. The study protocol was approved by  
176 the Medical Ethics Committee of School of Public Health, Sun Yat-sen University.

## 177 **2.2 Study design**

178 This was a randomized, double-blinded and parallel-designed trial. Subjects were  
179 asked to replace their accustomed oil with one of three tested oils (peanut oil, blend oil,  
180 and corn oil) for a one-year period. Table 1 shows the fatty acid compositions of the  
181 three types of oil. The recommended oil usage was 25 g/day (approximate 28 mL/day).  
182 A 50-mL cylindrical glass was supplied as a measuring tool for all participants. All  
183 subjects were asked to record their dietary intake of oil per meal in the first month of

184 the trial, as well as to reduce the frequency of eating out (less than two times per week).

185 At the beginning of the trial, all subjects received the dietary guidelines for Chinese  
186 residents, which are proposed by the Chinese Nutrition Society.

187 All subjects were asked to visit the nutrition clinic regularly (about once per month)  
188 to take two bottles of the tested oil and return the empty bottles. According to the record,  
189 the subjects daily consumed 30 mL cooking oil on average (approximately 27 g which  
190 was 2 g more than the planned dosage) .

191 The subjects' characteristics and demographic data were recorded when they were  
192 enrolled into study. Anthropometric, physical and blood pressure measurements were  
193 also performed. A 20 mL fasting blood sample was collected at month 0 (trial start  
194 time), month 3, month 6, and month 12 (trial end time). The blood samples were sent  
195 to the laboratory at room temperature on the same day for sample processing, analysis  
196 and storage. A food frequency questionnaire (FFQ) was completed at start and end time  
197 of the trial. The details of the protocols were described in our previous publication <sup>15</sup>.

### 198 2.3 Randomization and blinding

199 When the baseline tests were completed, subjects were randomly assigned to one  
200 of the three groups in random blocks of 15. A list of randomization numbers was  
201 computer-generated by a person who was not involved in the trial. Each randomization  
202 number corresponded to one intervention. Randomization numbers were assigned to  
203 the subjects in the order of enrollment. The taste and packaging of the three types of oil  
204 were identical. In order to ensure the efficacy of blinding, the participants were asked

205 which group they thought they were assigned to at the end of intervention. The  
206 proportions of the correct estimation for the peanut oil, blend oil and corn oil were 7%,  
207 36% and 11%, respectively ( $P < 0.001$ ).

## 208 **2.4 Erythrocyte membrane fatty acids**

209 To assess compliance of the participants in the trial, and also to explore the effects of  
210 long-term interventions of plant oils on the fatty acid composition of the body, the  
211 erythrocyte membrane fatty acid compositions were analyzed. The venous blood  
212 samples of each subjects were taken in the vacutainer tubes containing EDTA-K3 ( $\leq 2$   
213 mg/ml of blood) and they were centrifuged at 900 rpm for 15 min at room temperature.  
214 After isolation of plasma, the white blood cells, platelets, and erythrocytes were washed  
215 three times with an equal volume of saline solution in order to eliminate the residual  
216 plasma and buffy coat. After another centrifugation at 3,000 rpm for 10 min (hematocrit  
217 = 98%), several aliquots of 500  $\mu$ l of packed RBC with 2% butylated hydroxytoluene  
218 (BHT) in methanol (0.1 mg/ml of packed RBC) and  $N_2$  were immediately frozen in 2-  
219 ml plastic microtubes at  $-80^\circ\text{C}$  until assay.

220 Erythrocytes were thawed and hemolyzed in hypotonic Tris-HCl buffer, then lipids  
221 were extracted by chloroform/methanol (2:1, v/v) supplemented with 0.005% BHT.  
222 The extract was dried in  $N_2$ . Fatty acids methyl esters (FAMES) were obtained by  
223 incubating with 14% boron trifluoride ether/methanol (1:3, v/v) solution at  $100^\circ\text{C}$ , and  
224 were analyzed by gas chromatography as described in our previous articles <sup>16,17</sup>.

225 Individual fatty acid was identified by comparison with the standards (Sigma-

226 Aldrich Inc., St. Louis, MO, USA) and expressed as a percentage of total fatty acids  
227 quantified from peak areas. Of 32 fatty acids identified in erythrocyte membranes, 19  
228 fatty acids demonstrating meaningful concentrations (mean concentration > 0.10 %)   
229 were reported here, which together accounted for 96.9% of total identified fatty acids.

230 Blinded (indistinguishable from other samples) duplicate samples (n = 40) were  
231 analyzed throughout the study. The range of coefficients of variation (CVs) for these  
232 samples was 5.2–36.8%. The CVs for the most abundant fatty acids were 5.2% for  
233 palmitic acid (16:0), 10.5% for stearic acid (18:0), 8.1% for oleic acid (18:1n-9), 11.5%  
234 for  $\alpha$ -linolenic acid (18:3n-3), 8.5% for linoleic acid (18:2n-6), 15.2% for  
235 eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA; 20:5n-3) and 9.5% for docosahexaenoic acid (DHA;  
236 22:6n-3).

## 237 **2.5 Diet assessments**

238 Dietary intakes of energy and nutrients were assessed at the beginning and at the  
239 end of the study using the quantitative food frequency questionnaire (FFQ). It is a  
240 comprehensive questionnaire containing 119 items of food or food groups that was  
241 validated to estimate the intake of fatty acids among Chinese adults in South China <sup>16</sup>.  
242 The food intake frequency contains four categories: times per day, week, month or year.  
243 The questionnaires were completed through a face-to-face interview by trained staff.  
244 For each food item of FFQ, participants were asked to recall how often and how much  
245 on average they consumed over the preceding year.

## 246 **2.6 Plasma lipids and glucose**

247 Plasma was separated and stored at  $-80^{\circ}\text{C}$  until it was tested. All samples were  
248 analyzed in a single batch within 5 days to minimize laboratory variability. Plasma  
249 lipids profiles were detected at month 0, 3, 6 and 12 of the trial. TC, HDL-c, LDL-c,  
250 TG, ApoA1 and ApoB were measured with colorimetric methods using commercial  
251 kits (Biosino Biotechnology Company Ltd, Beijing, China) by an automated analyzer  
252 (A25 Biosystem, Barcelona, Spain). Fasting glucose concentration was measured by  
253 using the glucose oxidase method (Roche, Basel, Swiss). The CVs for lipid and glucose  
254 measurements were described previously<sup>15, 17</sup>.

255 Plasma hsCRP was measured by the Hitachi 7170A automatic analyzer in the  
256 clinical biochemistry laboratory at the First Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-Sen  
257 University. The CVs were 6.51% at 0.44 mg/dL and 2.06% at 3.06 mg/dL.

258 Plasma insulin was measured by radioimmunoassay (Beijing North Institute of  
259 Biotechnology Co. Ltd.). The HOMA-IR indices were calculated to evaluate insulin  
260 sensitivity. The calculation formula is as follows:  $\text{HOMA-IR} = [\text{fasting plasma insulin}$   
261  $(\text{mIU/L})] \times [\text{fasting plasma glucose (mmol/L)}] / 22.5$ .

## 262 **2.7 Statistical analysis**

263 Of the 251 enrolled participants eight participants were excluded from the intention-  
264 to-treat analysis because they received medical treatment during the intervention period  
265 though they all completed one-year follow-up. For the 24 participants who lost to the  
266 follow-up, the last-observation-carried-forward method was used. Per-protocol analysis  
267 restricted to the 219 participants who completed the one-year intervention was also

268 performed as a sensitivity analysis.

269 All results are expressed as mean  $\pm$  SD. The absolute change and its 95% confidence  
270 interval (95% CI) in BMI, systolic blood pressure (SBP), diastolic blood pressure  
271 (DBP), lipids, glucose, high sensitivity C-reactive protein (hsCRP), and erythrocyte  
272 membrane fatty acid levels from baseline to 12 months or six months were calculated  
273 by subtracting the baseline value from the 12-month or six-month value. Analysis of  
274 variance (ANOVA) was performed to evaluate the absolute treatment effects among  
275 the three groups. Differences between groups were estimated and tested using  
276 Bonferroni pairwise comparisons within each outcome if significant difference was  
277 observed among the three groups. All analyses were conducted with SPSS for Windows  
278 (version 21.0, SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL).  $P < 0.05$  was considered as statistically  
279 significant.

### 280 3. Results

281 A total of 739 volunteers were screened for eligibility, among whom 446 subjects  
282 were excluded. Reasons for exclusion were mainly based on predefined inclusion and  
283 exclusion criteria. Forty-two females were also excluded as their husbands were  
284 included. For the final 251 recruited participants, eight were removed from the  
285 intention-to-treat analysis because they had seen the doctor at least once during the one-  
286 year trial for the reasons that might affect the outcomes. Twenty-four participants who  
287 were lost to follow-up were further excluded in per-protocol analysis (**Figure 1**).

288 The descriptive characteristics of 151 females and 92 males in the intention-to-treat

289 analysis were shown in table 2. The mean (SD) age of females and males was  $54.2 \pm$   
290  $5.2$  years and  $57.2 \pm 7.2$  years, respectively ( $P = 0.017$ ). Only one woman was a  
291 current-smoker, while 50% of men were current-smokers. The education levels were  
292 similar between men and women ( $P > 0.05$ ). The baseline characteristics were similar  
293 across the three groups (data not shown).

### 294 **3.1 Dietary intake and fatty acid composition of erythrocyte membrane**

295 Table 3 presents the dietary intakes of energy and nutrients in each group. The  
296 average of energy intakes in the peanut, blend and corn oil group were  $2309.9 \pm 572.4$ ,  
297  $2333.1 \pm 588.1$ , and  $2312.6 \pm 559.7$  kcal/day at baseline and reduced to  $2161.4 \pm 495.1$ ,  
298  $2248.2 \pm 593.2$ , and  $2072.3 \pm 425.1$  kcal/day at month 12, respectively. The percentage  
299 of dietary fat that contributed to total energy reduced significantly by 4.1%, 2.5%, and  
300 3.1% in the peanut, blend and corn oil group respectively, but the changes had no  
301 significant difference among the groups ( $P = 0.331$ ). In the context of reduced intake  
302 of dietary fat, the intakes of SFA, MUFA, and PUFA of all participants also decreased  
303 during the intervention period. As cooking oil is the main source of dietary unsaturated  
304 fatty acids, the intake of n-6 PUFA increased dramatically in the corn oil group, and  
305 the intake of n-3 PUFA increased greatly in the blend oil group. The differences among  
306 the three groups are statistically significant (all  $P < 0.001$ ).

307 The changes of the fatty acid composition in the erythrocyte membrane are shown  
308 in Table 4. Consumption of the ALA-rich blend oil for one year increased the content  
309 of ALA in the erythrocyte membrane from  $0.099 \pm 0.039\%$  to  $0.125 \pm 0.029\%$  (net



310 difference: +0.027%; 95% CI: 0.013%, 0.041%). In contrast, subjects who consumed  
311 corn oil experienced a significant decrease of ALA content from  $0.118 \pm 0.059\%$  to  
312  $0.100 \pm 0.029\%$  (net difference: -0.018%; 95% CI: -0.034%, -0.003%). ( $P < 0.001$ ).  
313 The proportions of SFA, MUFA, and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) in the erythrocyte  
314 membrane decreased significantly, while the proportions of PUFA, n-6 PUFA, LA,  
315 and arachidonic acid (AA) significantly increased. However, these changes showed no  
316 significant difference among three groups (all  $P > 0.05$ , Table 4).

### 317 **3.2. Effects on the outcome parameters**

318 The effects of different types of plant oil on BMI, blood pressure, serum glucose,  
319 lipid profiles, insulin and hsCRP are shown in Table 5. After one-year intervention the  
320 subjects' BMI, systolic blood pressure, diastolic blood pressure, total cholesterol, LDL-  
321 cholesterol, triglyceride, ApoA1, and ApoB have improved in all participants, but with  
322 no statistically significant difference among the three groups .

323 Per-protocol analysis did not change the results essentially (data not shown).

### 324 **Discussion**

325 In the present study, we aimed to determine whether the use of three plant oils with  
326 different fatty acid compositions would result in different effects on the established risk  
327 factors of CVD in moderately hypercholesteremic individuals. Our data showed that  
328 fatty acid composition of the erythrocyte membrane was significantly affected.  
329 However, there were no significant differences in the cardiovascular risk factors among

330 the three groups.

331 It is well established that replacement of SFAs with LA could decrease LDL-c<sup>18</sup>,  
332 <sup>19</sup>. Additionally, increased dietary LA intake may improve insulin resistance<sup>20</sup>. A recent  
333 meta-analysis of RCTs suggested n-6 PUFA, mainly LA, significantly improved insulin  
334 secretion capacity when replacing SFA<sup>21</sup>. The effects of oleic acid and LA on CVD  
335 risk factors were seldom compared directly. Previous studies showed that both oleic  
336 acid and LA raised HDL-c, slightly lowered LDL-c and lowered TG when substituting  
337 for carbohydrate<sup>22</sup>. Our study is consistent with the previous statement. Our results  
338 indicated that peanut oil rich in oleic acid (43% of total fatty acids) had similar effects  
339 on CVD risk factors as corn oil which contained 55% LA.

340 There is a long-standing concern about the side effects of dietary LA on the  
341 inflammatory measures because LA is the precursor of arachidonic acid (AA), which  
342 is the substrate for the synthesis of a variety of pro-inflammatory molecules. Hence the  
343 health effects of ALA and LA have been widely compared for their potential  
344 antagonistic effects. Table S1 summarizes the characteristics and major findings from  
345 nine RCTs. Three of nine trials that performed in healthy subjects with normal blood  
346 lipids did not find any significantly different effects between the ALA and LA group  
347 <sup>23-26</sup>. However, among another six trials in subjects with different types of dyslipidemia  
348 <sup>27-35</sup>, four studies demonstrated that ALA and LA had different effects, especially on  
349 inflammatory markers and blood lipid profiles<sup>27, 31-34, 36</sup>. Based on these combined data,  
350 the potential different effects of ALA and LA might be more marked in subjects with  
351 high risk of CVDs. However, our study that performed in moderately

352 hypercholesteremic adults did not observe any significantly different effects between  
353 the peanut oil (LA) and blend oil (ALA) groups. The most important factor attributed to  
354 these discrepancies may be the amount of ALA intake per day. The net difference of  
355 ALA intake between the ALA group and the LA group is a minimum of 0.8 g/day<sup>26</sup>  
356 and a maximum of 10 g/day<sup>36</sup> in the above-mentioned nine trials. ALA intake per day  
357 is greater than 5.0 g/day in eight of the nine trials. In contrast, the net difference of the  
358 present study was 1.7 g/day (1.9 g/day in blend oil vs 0.2 g/day in corn oil). In the  
359 previous studies, only Kaul et al. used such a low dosage<sup>26</sup>. Consistently, they also  
360 failed to observe any significant effects on lipid profile, LDL oxidation or platelet  
361 aggregation over a 12-week intervention in healthy participants. Moreover, Kaul et al.  
362 also reported that supplementation with flaxseed oil (50% ALA and 14% LA) resulted  
363 in a significant but modest increase in plasma ALA. It is also consistent with our  
364 study. We showed that consumption of the ALA-rich blend oil for one year significantly  
365 increased the content of ALA in erythrocyte membrane.

366 There is compelling evidence suggesting that increased consumption of EPA and  
367 docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) from fish could reduce risk of CVDs and all-cause  
368 mortality<sup>4</sup>. However, data on the effects of ALA on CVD outcomes are limited and of  
369 poor quality<sup>37, 38</sup>. ALA is considered the precursor of EPA and DHA. Therefore, ALA  
370 EPA, and DHA should have similar physical effects on CVD risk when the amount of  
371 intake is biologically equivalent. In the present study, after a one year intervention, the  
372 percentages of EPA and DHA in erythrocyte membrane were not significantly different  
373 among the three groups. This suggested that ALA supplementation did not induce an

374 increase of EPA and DHA *in vivo*. In the study by Bemelmans et al. the subjects are  
375 given 6.3 g/day and 1.0 g/day ALA intakes in the ALA and LA groups for 2 years,  
376 respectively. They observed a significant difference in the changes of EPA and AA  
377 composition in the serum cholesteryl ester, which is consistent with their finding that  
378 the ALA group has a lower HDL-c, higher serum triacylglycerol and lower plasma  
379 fibrinogen <sup>27</sup>.

380 It is important to emphasize that we do not negate the potential healthy significance  
381 of ALA as an essential fatty acid on the cardiovascular system. Other than the relatively  
382 low intake of ALA, choosing LA but not animal fat rich in SFA as a control might be  
383 another factor contributing to the nonsignificant associations. We prefer to conclude  
384 that ALA was a fatty acid as “good” as LA, and the replacement of LA with ALA might  
385 have an equal effect on the risk of CVD development.

386 Our investigation benefited from a relatively large sample size and longer period  
387 of intervention than most of the previous trials. Our study provided evidence for the  
388 real-world interventions using plant oils. Potential limitations should also be considered.  
389 Firstly, although plant oil is the maximum dietary source of oleic (41%), linoleic (65%),  
390 and  $\alpha$ -linolenic acid (44%), the fatty acids derived from meat and meat products as well  
391 as other fat-rich food were not accurately assessed. Secondly, it is hard to estimate the  
392 actual consumption of plant oil for each subject during the one-year period although we  
393 provided measuring cylinder and collected empty bottles. Thirdly, we did not collect  
394 the information on the cooking styles when they used the plant oils, which may modify  
395 the health effects of plant oil. Finally, these results can only be generalized to the

396 specific study population enrolled in this study and it might not be applicable to other  
397 individuals such as those with different metabolic profiles, other race/ethnic  
398 populations, etc.

399 In summary, our study showed that using either peanut oil, blend oil, or corn oil with  
400 different fatty acid compositions had no impact on plasma lipids, glucose, and insulin  
401 after one-year intervention in moderately hypercholesteremic Chinese adults.

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**408 Competing interests**

409 The authors report no conflicts of interest and all are alone responsible for the  
410 content and writing of the paper.

**411 Ethics approval and consent to participate**

412 Ethics approval for the study was obtained from the School of Public Health, Sun  
413 Yat-sen University and informed consent was obtained from each participant.

**414 Consent for publication**

415 Not applicable.

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**418 Availability of data and materials**

419 The datasets for the current study are available from the corresponding author on  
420 reasonable request.

**421 Authors' contributions**

422 CCG, WP, YYB, ZSY, ZQ and ZB contributed to the data collection and analysis and  
423 the manuscript preparation. ZZQ contributed to manuscript preparation. CYM  
424 contributed to study design and statistical analysis. SYX and ZB were responsible for  
425 the conception and design of the study and critical revision of the manuscript.

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Table 1 Fatty acid composition of cooking oil (g per 100 g oil)

Fatty Acids	Peanut Oil	Blend Oil	Corn Oil
Myristic (14:0)	0.036	0.068	0.033
Palmitic (16:0)	10.899	8.375	12.322
Stearic (18:0)	4.023	3.031	1.957
Arachidic (20:0)	1.600	0.538	0.446
Behenic (22:0)	2.535	0.527	0.123
Lignoceric (24:0)	1.051	0.176	0.104
Total saturated Fatty Acids	20.144	12.715	14.985
Palmitoleic (16:1)	0.112	0.200	0.141
Oleic (18:1)	43.129	37.904	28.881
Gadoleic (20:1)	0.813	1.334	0.253
Erucic (22:1)	0.070	2.917	0.054
Total monounsaturated fatty acids	44.124	42.355	29.329
Linoleic (18:2)	34.304	37.241	54.538
$\alpha$ -linolenic (18:3)	1.006	7.461	0.964
Other fatty acids	0.422	0.229	0.184

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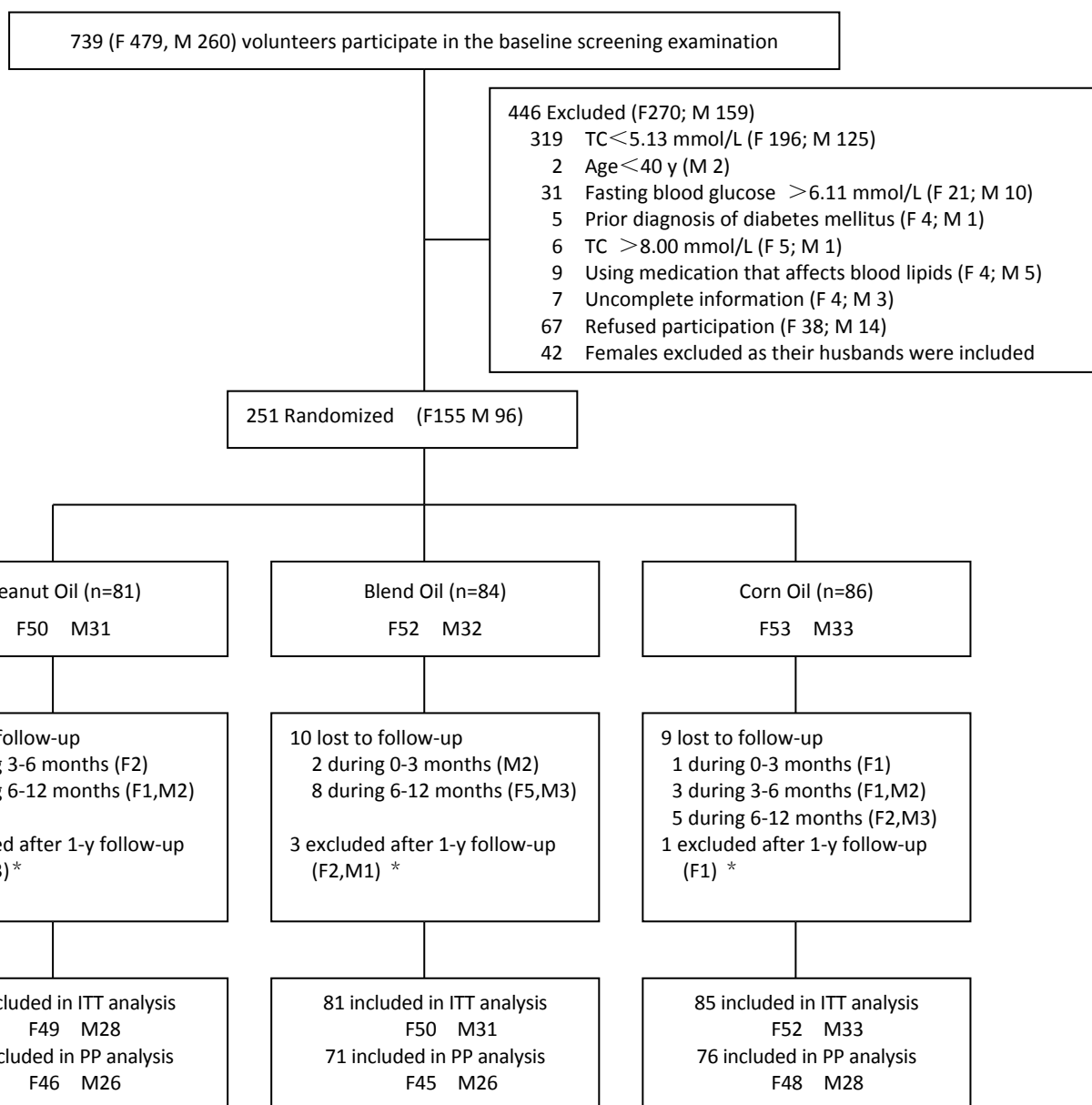
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**FIGURE 1** Participant flow diagram. \* Subjects were excluded because they had seen a doctor at least once during the intervention period for the following reasons: suspicious diabetes (1 in peanut oil group and 2 in blend oil group), stroke (1 in peanut oil group), coronary artery disease (1 in peanut oil group) and dyslipidemia (1 in each group, respectively). ITT analysis, intention-to-treat analysis; PP analysis, per-protocol analysis.

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Table 2 Descriptive characteristics of participants (intention-to-treat analysis)

	Female	Male
n	151	92
Age (year, mean $\pm$ SD)	54.2 $\pm$ 5.2	56.2 $\pm$ 7.0
Weight (cm, mean $\pm$ SD)	56.6 $\pm$ 8.2	67.2 $\pm$ 9.4
Height (kg, mean $\pm$ SD)	156.1 $\pm$ 5.9	168.5 $\pm$ 5.6
Education (%)		
Primary school or below	26.5	25.6
Junior high school	35.4	38.9
Senior high school	24.5	22.2
College or above	13.6	13.3
Smoking (%)		
Non-smoker	99.3	36.7
Ex-smoker	0	13.3
Current-smoker	0.7	50.0

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Table 3 Changes in dietary intakes of nutrients over the course of the study period

	0 mo <sup>*</sup>	12 mo <sup>*</sup>	Change(12mo – 0mo) <sup>†</sup>	<i>P</i>
Energy (kcal/day)				
Peanut oil	2309.9±572.4	2161.4±495.1	-148.5±593.0 (-284.0, -13.0)	0.332
Blend oil	2333.1±588.1	2248.2±593.2	-84.9±659.2 (-239.8, 70.0)	
Corn oil	2312.6±559.7	2072.3±425.1	-240.3±6444.4 (-390.6, -89.9)	
Protein (% of energy)				
Peanut oil	14.6±2.6	16.1±2.4	1.5±2.9 (0.8, 2.1)	0.625
Blend oil	15.0±3.2	16.3±2.7	1.3±3.2 (0.5, 2.0)	
Corn oil	14.5±2.7	15.5±2.8	1.0±2.9 (0.3, 1.7)	
Carbohydrate (% of energy)				
Peanut oil	50.8±7.2	53.4±6.7	2.6±6.3 (1.1, 4.0)	0.493
Blend oil	50.8±5.8	52.0±7.1	1.2±6.7 (-0.3, 2.8)	
Corn oil	52.5±6.4	54.6±6.8	2.1±7.9 (0.3, 4.0)	
Fat (% of energy)				
Peanut oil	34.6±6.9	30.5±6.2	-4.1±6.1(-5.5, -2.7)	0.331
Blend oil	34.2±5.4	31.7±6.6	-2.5±6.4 (-4.0, -1.0)	
Corn oil	33.0±5.6	29.8±5.8	-3.1±6.8 (-4.7, -1.6)	
SFA (% of energy)				
Peanut oil	8.6±2.9	7.4±2.2	-1.2±2.9(-1.8, -0.1)	0.328
Blend oil	8.3±2.8	7.7±2.2	-0.6±2.2 (-1.1, 0.0)	
Corn oil	8.0±2.3	7.2±2.3	-0.7±2.9 (-1.4, 0.1)	
MUFA (% of energy)				
Peanut oil	12.3±3.3	11.3±2.8	-0.9±3.2 (-1.6, -0.2)	0.001
Blend oil	12.5±2.8	11.9±2.3	-0.5±3.3 (-1.3, 0.3)	
Corn oil	11.9±2.6	9.4±2.5	-2.5±3.3 (-3.3, -1.7)	
PUFA (% of energy) <sup>‡</sup>				
Peanut oil	8.2±2.6	6.8±1.9	-1.5±2.6 (-2.1, -0.9)	<0.001
Blend oil	8.1±2.2	7.5±2.6	-0.6±2.8 (-1.3, 0.0)	
Corn oil	7.8±2.4	8.4±2.1	0.6±2.7 (0.0, 1.2)	
n-6 PUFA(% of energy) <sup>‡</sup>				

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Peanut oil	7.6±2.6	6.3±1.9	-1.3±2.6 (-1.9, -0.7)	
Blend oil	7.5±2.0	7.1±2.5	-0.4±2.8 (-1.0, 0.3)	<0.001
Corn oil	7.2±2.3	7.8±2.0	0.6±2.6 (-0.1, 1.2)	
n-3 PUFA(% of energy)				
Peanut oil	0.38±0.25	0.21±0.08	-0.2±0.3 (-0.2, -0.1)	
Blend oil	0.38±0.25	1.00±0.43	0.6±0.5 (0.5, 0.7)	<0.001
Corn oil	0.33±0.23	0.39±0.15	0.1±0.3 (0.0, 0.1)	

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648 \* Values are mean ± SD

649 † Values are mean ± SD (95% confidence interval)

650 SFA, Saturated fatty acids; MUFA, monounsaturated fatty acids; PUFA, polyunsaturated fatty acids; LA, linoleic

651 acid; ALA, α-Linolenic acid; EPA, eicosapentaenoic acid; DHA, docosahexaenoic acid.

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Table 4 Changes in fatty acid composition of erythrocyte membrane (% of total fatty acids) over the course of the study period

	0 mo	12 mo	Change (12mo – 0mo)	<i>p</i> *
SFA				
Peanut oil	40.77±2.82	39.42±1.51	-1.35±3.15(-2.20, -0.50)	
Blend oil	41.10±2.86 <sup>†</sup>	39.91±2.06	-1.19±3.55 (-2.14, -0.24) <sup>‡</sup>	0.749
Corn oil	40.88±2.66	39.99±1.55	-0.89±3.15 (-1.69, -0.09)	
MUFA				
Peanut oil	17.15±1.27	16.43±1.34	-0.72±1.80(-1.21, -0.23)	
Blend oil	17.18±1.47	16.36±1.33	-0.83±1.86 (-1.32, -0.33)	0.626
Corn oil	16.97±1.26	15.95±1.12	-1.02±1.38 (-1.37, -0.67)	
PUFA				
Peanut oil	38.96±2.71	40.83±2.04	1.87±3.24(1.00, 2.75)	
Blend oil	38.57±2.69	40.39±2.56	1.82±3.45 (0.89, 2.74)	0.950
Corn oil	38.91±2.76	40.59±2.40	1.68±3.61 (0.75, 2.60)	
n-3 PUFA				
Peanut oil	11.06±2.95	12.10±2.85	1.04±3.66(0.05, 2.03)	
Blend oil	10.77±2.39	11.30±2.76	0.54±3.59 (-0.43, 1.50)	0.280
Corn oil	11.48±2.59	11.42±2.51	-0.06±3.81 (-1.03, 0.92)	
ALA				
Peanut oil	0.112±0.041	0.121±0.033	0.008±0.045(-0.004, 0.020)	
Blend oil	0.099±0.039	0.125±0.029	0.027±0.051 (0.013, 0.041)	<0.001
Corn oil	0.118±0.059	0.100±0.029	-0.018±0.061 (-0.034, -0.003)	
EPA				
Peanut oil	0.393±0.175	0.320±0.127	-0.073±0.151(-0.114, -0.033)	
Blend oil	0.406±0.168	0.320±0.155	-0.086±0.209 (-0.142, -0.030)	0.447
Corn oil	0.422±0.208	0.302±0.146	-0.121±0.247 (-0.184, -0.057)	
DHA				
Peanut oil	8.87±2.82	10.31±2.91	1.44±3.68(0.44, 2.43)	
Blend oil	8.58±2.48	9.39±2.81	0.81±3.70 (-0.19, 1.80)	0.306
Corn oil	9.23±2.62	9.59±2.56	0.36±3.90 (-0.64, 1.36)	
n-6 PUFA				
Peanut oil	27.89±2.43	28.73±2.15	0.84±2.87 (0.06, 1.61)	
Blend oil	27.80±2.40	29.09±1.93	1.28±2.62 (0.58, 1.98)	0.223
Corn oil	27.44±2.35	29.18±2.35	1.73±2.82 (1.01, 2.46)	
LA				

				View Article Online DOI: 10.1039/D0FO00875C
	Peanut oil	11.33±1.87	11.26±1.52	-0.07±1.72 (-0.54, 0.39)
	Blend oil	10.66±1.51	11.13±1.32	0.47 ± 1.51 (0.06, 0.87)
	Corn oil	10.88±1.42	11.56±1.44	0.68 ± 1.84 (0.21, 1.15)
	AA			
	Peanut oil	13.00±1.58	14.01±1.34	1.01±1.59 (0.58, 1.44)
	Blend oil	13.45±1.67	14.39±1.51	0.94 ± 1.74 (0.47, 1.41)
	Corn oil	13.12±1.51	14.00±1.40	0.87 ± 1.52 (0.48, 1.26)
	n-6:n-3			
	Peanut oil	2.71±0.80	2.59±0.78	-0.16±0.98 (-0.43, 0.10)
	Blend oil	2.72±0.69	2.74±0.76	0.02 ± 0.99 (-0.24, 0.28)
	Corn oil	2.52±0.65	2.70±0.72	0.18 ± 0.98 (-0.07, 0.43)
	P:S			
	Peanut oil	0.964±0.127	1.039±0.084	0.07±0.15 (0.03, 0.11)
	Blend oil	0.946±0.120	1.017±0.106	0.07 ± 0.16 (0.03, 0.11)
	Corn oil	0.960±0.125	1.018±0.094	0.06 ± 0.16 (0.02, 0.10)

0.055

0.903

0.169

0.842

688 \* *P* value for the effect of treatment, ANOVA for change (12mo - 0mo)

689 † mean ± SD, all such values.

690 ‡ mean ± SD (95%CI), all such values.

691 SFA, saturated fatty acids; MUFA, monounsaturated fatty acids; PUFA, polyunsaturated fatty acids; LA, linoleic  
 692 acid; ALA, α-Linolenic acid; EPA, eicosapentaenoic acid; DHA, docosahexaenoic acid; AA, arachidonic acid; P:S,  
 693 polyunsaturated fatty acids: saturated fatty acids

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Table 5 Changes in main parameters over the course of the study period

	0 mo	3 mo	6 mo	12 mo	Change	<i>p</i> *
	Baseline				( Final visit – baseline)	
Body Mass Index (kg/m <sup>2</sup> )						
Peanut oil	23.20±2.60	22.78±2.54	22.57±2.42	22.82±2.67	-0.38±1.03 (-0.62, -0.15)	0.490
Blend oil	23.23±2.86 †	23.02±3.40	22.71±3.13	22.80±2.98	-0.43 ± 0.90 (-0.63, -0.23) §	
Corn oil	23.63±3.19	23.34±3.23	23.13±3.27	23.38±3.34	-0.24 ± 0.87 (-0.43, -0.05)	
Waist-to-hip Ratio						
Peanut oil	0.86±0.06	0.85±0.09	0.85±0.06	0.84±0.09	-0.016±0.080 (-0.034, 0.002)	0.289
Blend oil	0.86±0.06	0.86±0.06	0.87±0.06	0.86±0.06	-0.001 ± 0.039 (-0.009, 0.008)	
Corn oil	0.86±0.06	0.87±0.06	0.87±0.06	0.85±0.06	-0.009 ± 0.038 (-0.017, -0.001)	
Systolic Blood Pressure (mmHg)						
Peanut oil	120.5±17.6	119.5±16.3	115.2±15.9	113.1±13.6	-7.33±15.75 (-10.91, -3.76)	0.205
Blend oil	126.4±17.4	122.4±19.6	118.4±18.9	116.3±19.0	-10.08 ± 16.84 (-13.82, -6.32)	
Corn oil	122.7±17.2	118.2±15.9	114.0±18.8	115.3±19.0	-8.02 ± 17.64 (-11.88, -4.17)	
Diastolic Blood Pressure (mmHg)						
Peanut oil	78.8±9.19	77.2±9.8	78.7±10.6	76.3±9.3	-2.40±9.44 (-4.55, -0.26)	0.119
Blend oil	83.4±10.9	79.7±10.5	80.9±11.9	79.0±11.1	-4.43 ± 9.92 (-6.63, -2.21)	
Corn oil	81.7±10.7	78.6±10.2	79.1±12.1	78.7±10.7	-3.01 ± 10.34 (-5.27, -0.75)	
Total cholesterol (mmol/L)						
Peanut oil	6.13±0.70	5.62±1.01	5.61±0.78	5.37±0.96	-0.76±0.86 (-0.95, -0.55)	

Blend oil	6.03±0.65	5.50±0.87	5.49±0.82	5.39±0.82	-0.64±0.83 (-0.82, -0.46)	0.571
Corn oil	6.09±0.73	5.69±0.89	5.56±0.90	5.46±0.90	-0.64±0.90 (-0.83, -0.43)	
LDL-cholesterol (mmol/L)						
Peanut oil	4.27±0.95	3.70±1.02	3.86±0.97	3.59±0.76	-0.68±1.07 (-0.93, -0.44)	0.606
Blend oil	4.25±1.01	3.46±0.96	3.59±1.00	3.69±0.86	-0.56±1.07 (-0.80, -0.32)	
Corn oil	4.26±0.94	3.53±0.97	3.82±1.00	3.72±0.83	-0.54±1.02 (-0.76, -0.32)	
HDL-cholesterol (mmol/L)						0.753
Peanut oil	1.75±0.30	1.51±0.29	1.49±0.29	1.71±0.35	-0.04±0.40 (-0.13, 0.05)	
Blend oil	1.71±0.51	1.49±0.24	1.55±0.32	1.72±0.31	0.01±0.58 (-0.12, 0.14)	
Corn oil	1.78±0.50	1.53±0.26	1.57±0.29	1.69±0.38	-0.09±0.54 (-0.21, 0.03)	
Triacylglycerols (mmol/L) <sup>†</sup>						0.231
Peanut oil	2.42±1.53	1.78±1.06	1.83±0.97	1.28±0.75	-1.14±1.63 (-1.51, -0.77)	
Blend oil	2.48±1.48	2.01±1.43	2.05±1.32	1.54±0.88	-0.76±1.65 (-1.13, -0.40)	
Corn oil	2.56±1.97	1.96±1.33	2.01±1.10	1.42±0.83	-1.16±1.82 (-1.55, -0.76)	
ApoA1(g/L)						0.960
Peanut oil	1.59±0.28	—	1.51±0.29	1.49±0.26	-0.12±0.29 (-0.18, -0.05)	
Blend oil	1.56±0.29	—	1.51±0.27	1.49±0.27	-0.06±0.20 (-0.10, 0.01)	
Corn oil	1.58±0.29	—	1.54±0.28	1.49±0.28	-0.09±0.23 (-0.14, -0.04)	
ApoB (g/L)						0.644
Peanut oil	1.35±0.28	—	1.19±0.23	1.45±0.36	0.09±0.33 (0.02, 0.17)	
Blend oil	1.33±0.25	—	1.14±0.28	1.42±0.34	0.09±0.28 (0.03, 0.16)	
Corn oil	1.36±0.29	—	1.15±0.27	1.45±0.30	0.09±0.33 (0.01, 0.16)	
Glucose (mmol/L)						

Peanut oil	4.61±0.83		4.43±0.64		0.18±0.80 (-0.02, 0.38)
Blend oil	4.72±0.65	—	4.62±0.65	—	0.10±0.67 (-0.07, 0.27)
Corn oil	4.54±0.62	—	4.44±0.72	—	0.11±0.74 (-0.07, 0.29)
Insulin (μU/ml)					
Peanut oil	7.72±3.23		6.94±3.94		-0.78±3.63 (-1.69, 0.12)
Blend oil	7.73±3.88	—	7.44±4.34	—	-0.29±4.26 (-1.36, 0.78)
Corn oil	8.35±3.42	—	7.46±4.05	—	-0.89±3.63 (-1.77, 0.02)
HOMA-IR					
Peanut oil	1.53±0.71		1.45±0.77		-0.08±0.84 (-0.29, 0.13)
Blend oil	1.59±0.88	—	1.57±0.96	—	-0.02±0.96 (-0.26, 0.22)
Corn oil	1.67±0.80	—	1.56±0.90	—	-0.11±0.87 (-0.32, 0.10)
hsCRP (mg/L)					
Peanut oil	1.54±0.64		1.48±0.61		-0.60±0.59 (-0.21, 0.09)
Blend oil	1.71±0.69	—	1.65±0.72	—	0.06±0.46 (-0.18, 0.06)
Corn oil	1.68±0.77	—	1.62±0.80	—	-0.06±0.42 (-0.16, 0.04)

\* *P* value for the effect of treatment, ANOVA for change (12mo - 0mo)

† log transformed before statistical analysis.

‡ mean ± SD, all such values.

§ mean ± SD (95% CIs), all such values.

|| not analyzed.

717 SFA, saturated fatty acids; MUFA, monounsaturated fatty acids; PUFA, polyunsaturated fatty acids; LA, linoleic acid; ALA,  $\alpha$ -Linolenic acid; EPA, eicosapentaenoic acid; DHA, docosahexaenoic  
718 acid; AA, arachidonic acid; P:S, polyunsaturated fatty acids: saturated fatty acids; IMT, intima-media thickness; HOMA-IR, homeostasis model assessment insulin resistance index; hsCRP, high  
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