

Small studies can be misleading

Because...

- Detecting benefits and harms is harder with few participants
- In small studies, results are more likely to be due to chance
- A study with few participants may not be representative of the general population

Warning signs

“...a **small sample size**...”

“...a **preliminary study**...”

No information about study size

Results cannot be generalized if the sample is small or the study is preliminary. If the size is not reported, you should be suspicious.

- **Ask yourself** about the number of participants and how many of them had benefits or harms
- **Be cautious** if a study includes few participants or reports few benefits or harms
- **Remember** that small studies are less reliable and their results are less generalizable

