

University College of London Study Says Your Mom is Right: Eat More Fruit and Vegetables

By Nora Al Baghdadi

According to an aptly named article called [*Mom was Right: Eat Lots of Vegetables*](#) that was published recently in the Washington Post, researchers from University College London have discovered that eating even more than the recommended servings of fresh produce can help people live longer. The research study drew upon a broad base of people as it tracked more than 65,000 British people from a representative population over the course of 12 years.

The research discovered that people who enjoyed more than six servings of fruit and vegetables every day had a 42 percent reduced risk of dying from from diseases than people who consumed less than one portion of fruit and vegetables every day. Furthermore, adding this generous amount of produce to the diet reduced the risk of dying from cancer by a quarter and from heart disease by 31 percent.

Dr. Oyinlola Oyebode of University College London's Department of Epidemiology & Public Health, the lead author of the study, said that the findings were clear that eating more vegetables reduced the risk of death. Fruit is good too, but consuming more vegetables is even better. In Australia, for example, the government suggests eating two servings of fruit and five servings of vegetables a day, and that would also seem to be what this study suggests.

The study also demonstrated that one should not just rely upon fruit because vegetables had more of a positive effect than fruit. Interestingly enough, eating canned fruit actually increased the risk of death, and drinking servings of fruit juice seemed to have no effect at all.

However, even eating less than seven servings a day of fresh produce had positive effects on lifespan. For example, even consuming one to three portions of produce a day reduced the risk of death by 14 percent. However, the benefits of eating a lot of vegetables and some fruit each day seemed to drop off after a maximum of seven servings. On the other hand, eating more than seven servings did not seem to have any negative impact, so people can feel free to reach for their eighth or nine serving of spinach if they choose to.

The study team did point out that they did not establish a direct link from eating a lot of vegetables to living longer. For example, as the negative impact of eating canned and possibly sweetened fruit might establish, it might be that the consumption of a lot of fresh unprocessed food means that some individuals avoid less healthy food. To be fair, the study did not document the average daily calorie or salt intake of any of the subjects. It could be

that subjects who chose to eat fresh vegetables all day did not eat a lot of salty or fried potatoes.

Additionally, the study was based upon people's own voluntary reports of their eating habits. It was not based upon data collected by researchers who actually watched 65,000 people take their meals over the course of 12 years. However, even if subjects exaggerated the amount of fresh produce that they consumed each day, it would still back up the findings. It seems unlikely that people would report eating less fruit and vegetables than they actually did.

What some people might find even more interesting is that this research took into account poor health habits. That means that the data stood up even after accounting for people who were overweight, smoked, consumed alcohol or did not exercise. Again, the findings are not 100 percent conclusive, but they might encourage some people to spend more time in the produce section when picking out groceries.