

Study Finds Eating Fruits and Vegetables Lowers Risks of Heart Disease

November 25 2009

(PhysOrg.com) -- A new study of adults aged 70 or older found that increased servings of fruits and vegetables were significantly associated with a decrease of cognitive impairment, and that those eating three or more servings of vegetables per day had a 30 percent lower risk of death from heart disease.

The study was led by Dr. Longjian Liu, MD, PhD, a professor at the Drexel University School of Public Health. The results of the study were first reported in the November 3, 2009 edition of *Circulation*, an American Heart Association journal. Dr. Xiaoyan Yin at the University of Pennsylvania was the coauthor for the report.

“The study highlights that an increase in [vegetable intake](#) and better cognitive function has significant effects on the reduction of death from [heart disease](#), as well as death from all causes in older adults,” said Liu. “Basically, this shows that even as an older adult, you should still eat your vegetables.”

The study assessed data from the second national Longitudinal Study of Aging, which was the largest national study of community-dwelling adults aged 70 years or older at that time of participation in 1994 and 1996. The study examined participants’ diet behaviors and cognitive function (assessed using global cognitive function score) in relation to the risk of mortality at the end of the follow-up in December 2002.

Of the 9,447 total participants, 4,879 participants—1,778 males and

3,101 females—completed the cognitive function measure. Within an average seven-year follow-up, 1,286 participants died. Males had a 30 percent mortality rate, which was significantly higher than the 24 percent mortality rate for females.

The study found that increased servings of fruits and vegetables were significantly associated with decreased prevalence rates of [cognitive impairment](#). In addition, the study indicated that participants who ate three or more servings of vegetables each day had a 30 percent lower risk of death from heart disease, and a 15 percent lower risk of death from all causes, than those who had less than three servings of [vegetables](#) per day.

The researchers also found that those with a global cognitive function score of less than 12 (defined as cognitive impairment, of those who were in the first quartile of scores), had a 55 percent higher risk of death from heart disease, and a 51 percent higher all-cause mortality rate than those with a global cognitive function score higher than 12.

Dr. Liu is an associate professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the Drexel University School of Public Health. He has extensive research experience in the United States, China, Japan and the United Kingdom in the fields of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer in relation to nutrition, aging, environment and health disparities. Dr. Liu is a member of several scientific and professional societies, and fellow of American Heart Association.

Provided by Drexel University

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