

Dietary Guidelines for Americans linked to lower death rates in population in southeast US

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Adherence to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) is linked to lower death rates in a low-income population in southeastern US.

In a low-income population from the southeastern US, higher adherence to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) was linked with 14%-23% lower mortality from [cardiovascular disease](#), cancer, and other diseases, according to a study published by Wei Zheng and colleagues from Vanderbilt University, Nashville, USA, in this week's *PLOS Medicine*.

The researchers analyzed data from the Southern Community Cohort Study (SCCS), a study including 84,735 American adults, aged 40-79 y, who were recruited mostly from community health centers that serve low-income populations from 12 southeastern US states during 2002-2009. Over half of the [participants](#) were poor with an annual [household income](#) of less than USD 15,000 and 65% were African American. Of the 77,572 participants with follow-up information over a mean period of 6.2 years, 6,906 participants died; including 2,244 from cardiovascular disease, 1,794 from cancer, and 2,550 from other diseases. After controlling for factors such as age, weight, exercise, smoking, household income and the presence of specific [chronic diseases](#), the researchers found that participants with better adherence to the DGA, as reported using a food frequency questionnaire, had a lower risk of dying from diseases in the follow-up period. Participants with the healthiest diet

(those in the top one-fifth) had only about 80% of the risk of death than those with the least healthy diet (those in the bottom one-fifth). This reduction by approximately 20 percent was similar for the risk of death from any disease, death from cancer, and death from cardiovascular disease.

The results support the validity of the DGA for healthy eating across the US population, however the study had some limitations. For example, participants were asked only once about their diet, their household income, and about other factors that can change over time such as exercise habits and diseases they had been diagnosed with.

The authors say: "This is the first study to our knowledge reporting this association in a low-income population that largely comprises African-Americans, providing direct evidence for [disease](#) prevention through dietary modification in this underserved population."

More information: Yu D, Sonderman J, Buchowski MS, McLaughlin JK, Shu X-O, Steinwandel M, et al. (2015) Healthy Eating and Risks of Total and Cause-Specific Death among Low-Income Populations of African-Americans and Other Adults in the Southeastern United States: A Prospective Cohort Study. *PLoS Med* 12(5): e1001830. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1001830](#)

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