

Spending more on food is associated with a healthier diet and weight

January 27 2016

According to an epidemiological study carried out by researchers at the Hospital del Mar Medical Research Institute (IMIM), increasing the money you spend on food is linked to a better quality diet, particularly increased consumption of fruit and vegetables, leading to a healthier weight and decreased risk of cardiometabolic diseases like obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular problems.

The researchers monitored a group of 2181 Spanish men and women aged 25 to 74, all part of the REGICOR (Registre Gironí del Cor) programme, for a period of ten years. They measured their height and weight, and recorded dietary data obtained from a scientifically validated food frequency questionnaire. The average food cost was calculated using official government data.

According to Helmut Schröder, a researcher in the IMIM's cardiovascular risk and nutrition research group, "We have seen that a 1.4€ increase in average spending on food is associated with the consumption of 74 grams more vegetables and 52 grams more fruit, per person per day, for a 1000 kcal diet. Conversely, a reduction of 0.06€ in average spending is linked to a decrease of 121 grams of vegetables and 94 grams of fruit, as well as increased consumption of foodstuffs like fast food and baked goods." "This implies weight gain that could be related to a higher risk of cardiometabolic complications in the future" adds the researcher.

A healthy diet is essential for good physical and mental health and its

quality depends on a person's choice of food, something that is conditioned to a great extent by price, culture, taste and convenience. Between 2000 and 2010, the price of healthy food rose sharply in Spain when compared to less healthy options. The cost of [healthier foods](#), meaning those low in calories and rich in nutrients, like fruit, increased by 50%, while pastries and processed products only went up 10% and 23.1%, respectively.

This work is important for raising the awareness of public health officials, as it underlines the need for policies and action that promote healthy diets accessible to all income levels. It should have implications for [food](#) prices, agriculture, and fiscal policies, as well as the implementation of consumer aid programmes.

More information: Helmut Schröder et al. Association of increased monetary cost of dietary intake, diet quality and weight management in Spanish adults, *British Journal of Nutrition* (2016). [DOI: 10.1017/S0007114515005048](#)

Provided by Hospital del Mar Medical Research Institute

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