

Nutrition in primary care yields health and economic benefits

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Personalized nutrition advice from primary healthcare providers including General Practitioners is better than usual care at improving a person's health and costs little more, a Griffith University study has found.

Researchers from Griffith's Healthy Primary Care team conducted an

international review of published [health studies](#) from the UK, Ireland, Western Europe, The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia to determine the cost of providing nutrition care to patients with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity and malnutrition.

"We found that personalized support to eat a [healthy diet](#) provided in community-based health services was much more effective at improving a person's health than usual care, and only slightly more costly," said lead researcher Dr. Katelyn Barnes.

She said while it should be expected that any intervention is more costly than usual care, they still found that the cost required to improve people's health was minimal, and within recommended ranges for viable health investments.

"The studies we examined showed that over three to 24 months, a person who is eating healthier may have fewer visits to health professionals, reduced medications and feel more productive."

Given the benefits, Dr. Barnes says now is the time for smart governments to realize the opportunity they have: invest in nutrition care to save money.

"The cost of not investing in regular support for healthy eating will be felt mostly by individuals through poorer health outcomes and increased use of [health services](#)," she said.

"The study is timely given the current efforts by the [federal government](#) to set a 10-year plan for Australian primary care, including to be more comprehensive and person-centered.

"Nutrition clearly has a prominent role in our future's health system. Overall, benefits from a person's dietary improvements are felt by

multiple parties including governments, general businesses, health insurance and services, and individual people through lower health care spending (via taxes), and improved quality of life and economic productivity."

More information: Katelyn A Barnes et al, How cost-effective is nutrition care delivered in primary healthcare settings? A systematic review of trial-based economic evaluations, *Nutrition Reviews* (2021). [DOI: 10.1093/nutrit/nuab082](https://doi.org/10.1093/nutrit/nuab082)

Provided by Griffith University

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