

A Garden Variety Recipe for a Healthier and Wealthier Nation

In 2005 and 2006, researchers led by Luc Dauchet of the Institut Pasteur showed that each additional daily portion of fruits and vegetables a person eats reduces their risk of coronary heart disease by 4 percent and their risk of stroke by 5 percent. But that news hasn't changed our habits much.



In fact, according to the Produce for Better Health Foundation's most recent data, in 2009 adults over 65 ate 10 percent less produce than in 2004. The good news: During the same period, children under 12 ate at least 5 percent more fruits and veggies. An analysis of Dauchet's data by the Union of Concerned Scientists shows what healthier eating could mean to our well-being – and wallet.



On average, we eat less than half the recommended 4 ½ cups of fruits and vegetables.*

600,000
die every year from heart disease

130,000
die every year from stroke

\$273 billion
spent in direct medical costs.



If we ate ½ cup more of fruits and vegetables every day, each year there would be:

23,854
fewer deaths from heart disease

6,447
fewer deaths from stroke

\$5 billion
saved in medical costs.



If we ate the recommended 4 ½ cups of fruits and vegetables* every day, each year there would be:

100,185
fewer deaths from heart disease

27,076
fewer deaths from stroke

\$17 billion
saved in medical costs.

*Based on a 2,000-calorie-per-day diet.

Source: Dauchet et al. 2005; Dauchet et al. 2006; Heidenreich et al. 2011; "The \$11 Trillion Reward," Union of Concerned Scientists; CDC; USDA; "The State of the Plate," Produce for Better Health Foundation; "Menus of Change 2013," Harvard School of Public Health.

Credit: SwitchYard Media and Food & Environment Reporting Network