



simplicity adds to life

A 10-year study of more than 59,000 Swedish women confirms that eating a wide variety of healthful foods can reduce the risk of premature death by as much as 42 per cent!

Women who followed a healthful food pattern—defined as consumption of a high variety of fruits, vegetables, wholegrain breads, cereals, fish and low-fat dairy products—had significantly lower death rates than women who consumed few of these foods.

And for each additional healthful food consumed within a given time period, the risk of death was 5 per cent lower.

How is food variety defined?

Food variety can be defined in a number of ways. Eating foods that are biologically different, say carrots and bananas, for example, or variable in their nutritional profile. For example, choosing widely from different food groups.

What it predicts

Several studies show that an increased food variety is linked to longevity. The Japanese, acknowledged to have the longest life expectancy in the Western world, suggest that 30 or more different kinds of foods be eaten daily. A lack of food variety is associated with a higher risk of death from cancer and CVD.

Why it might be better

Greater food variety results in a better nutrient intake. And it seems that the sum of a highly varied diet is greater than its parts. Eating many differently coloured, flavoured and textured foods also lessens the likelihood of consuming an excess of substances that may be toxic.

Dietary guidelines have long urged us to eat a wide variety of foods, but variety over the day and week is best. Eating a large variety of foods at any one meal, such as from smorgasbords or buffets, promotes an excessive intake of kilojoules.

See **page 49** for a health-enhancing recipe.