Current and Former Smokers: Eat Your Fruits and Vegetables

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Each additional daily serving of fruits and vegetables that smokers and former smokers eat is associated with a 4 to 8 percent lower risk of their developing [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/29/health/29lung.html), the third leading cause of death in the United States, a new study found.

The [study, in Thorax](http://press.psprings.co.uk/thx/february/thx207851.pdf), looked at more than 44,000 Swedish men, ages 45 to 79, who completed detailed health and dietary questionnaires. Nearly two-thirds had smoked at some point, and roughly one in four were current smokers.

Over the 13-year course of the study, 1,918 new cases of C.O.P.D. were identified. Men who ate five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day were 35 percent less likely to develop lung disease than those who ate two servings or less. There was no benefit for nonsmokers.

Antioxidants in fruits and vegetables may help to counter the harmful effects of smoking, the researchers say.

“Even if smokers cannot give up smoking, they should consume as many fruits and vegetables as possible, and people who quit smoking should also increase their consumption,” said Joanna Kaluza, the first author of the paper and a professor at Warsaw University of Life Sciences in Poland. She said the protective effects of fruits and vegetables are likely to apply to women as well.