

Most Americans eat much less than recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables.

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Most Americans Eat Much Less than Recommended Amounts of Fruits and Vegetables **Web site exclusive!**

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Abstract

Objective

To estimate the proportions of the population meeting recommendations for fruit and vegetable intake, we first estimated the usual intake distributions of total fruits and vegetables and then compared the results to the 5 A Day recommendation and to the recommendations for fruits and vegetables combined, found in the new US Department of Agriculture food guide, MyPyramid.

Design/subjects

The primary dataset was created from one 24-hour recall from each of 8,070

respondents in the 1999-2000 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Variances were estimated using one or two 24-hour recalls from 14,963 respondents in the 1994-1996 Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical method developed at Iowa State University was used for estimating distributions of usual intake of dietary components that are consumed daily. It was modified to allow the adjustment of heterogeneous within-person variances using an external estimate of heterogeneity.

Results

In 1999-2000, only 40% of Americans ate an average of five or more $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup servings of fruits and vegetables per day. The proportions of sex² age groups meeting the new US Department of Agriculture recommendations ranged from 0.7% of boys aged 14 to 18 years, whose combined recommendation is 5 cups, to 48% of children aged 2 to 3 years, whose combined recommendation is 2 cups.

Conclusions

Americans need to consume more fruits and vegetables, especially dark green and orange vegetables and legumes. Nutritionists must help consumers realize that, for everyone older than age 3 years, the new recommendations for fruit and vegetable intakes are greater than the familiar five servings a day.



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