



National Cancer Institute

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Cancer Trends Progress Report – 2007 Update



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Fruit and vegetable intake has remained relatively stable since 1994.

Limited Fruit and Vegetable Consumption is a Cancer Risk

People whose diets are rich in plant foods such as fruits and vegetables have a lower risk of getting cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, esophagus, stomach, lung, and there is some suggested evidence for colon, pancreas, and prostate. They are also less likely to get diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension. A diet high in fruits and vegetables helps to reduce calorie intake and may help to control weight.

To help prevent these cancers and other chronic diseases, experts recommend 4 to 13 servings of fruits and vegetables daily, depending on energy needs. This includes 2 to 5 servings of fruits and 2 to 8 servings of vegetables, with special emphasis on dark-green and orange vegetables and legumes. There is no evidence that the popular white potato protects against cancer.

Measure

Average daily cups of fruits and vegetables for people ages 2 and older. This measure includes fruits and vegetables from all sources. One serving is approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ cup.

Period – 1989–2004

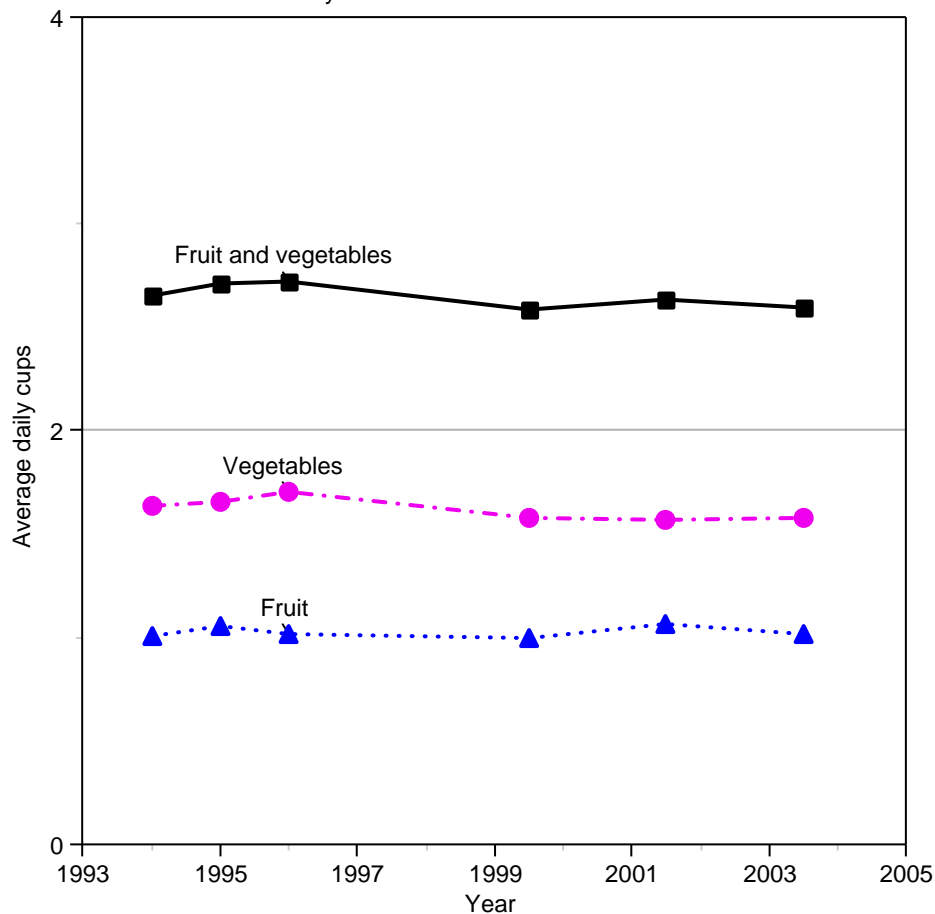
Trends

Total fruits and vegetables: Relatively stable

Fruits: Relatively stable

Vegetables: Relatively stable

Figure P9. Average daily cups of fruit and vegetables consumed by individuals aged 2 years and older: 1994-2004



Source (1989 & 1996 Data): U.S. Department of Agriculture. Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals. \n Source (1999+ Data): National Center for Health Statistics. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. \n Data are age-adjusted to the 2000 standard using age groups: 2-5, 6-11, 12-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, 80+. Analysis uses the 2000 Standard Population as defined by NCHS (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/statnt/statnt20.pdf>).

Most Recent Estimates

In 2003-2004, people aged 2 and older had, on average, 1.0 cup of fruit and 1.6 cups of vegetables, for a total of 2.6 cups of fruits and vegetables. Total vegetable servings included:

- Dark-green/orange: 0.14 cups
- Starchy: 0.45 cups (largely comprising fried potatoes)
- Tomatoes and other vegetables: 0.88 cups

Among racial and ethnic groups, Non-Hispanic Blacks had 2.3 total cups of fruits and vegetables per day, while Non-Hispanic Whites had 2.6 and Mexican-Americans had 2.9.

Healthy People 2010 Targets

At least two daily servings of fruits.

At least three daily servings of vegetables, with at least one-third being dark-green/orange.

(The Healthy People 2010 targets call for 75 percent of the population to consume the minimum servings of fruits and 50 percent to consume the minimum servings of vegetables. However, the minimum number of servings in these targets predates the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which recommend higher intakes.)

Groups at High Risk for Not Eating Enough Fruits and Vegetables

Fruit consumption is highest among the youngest and oldest segments of the population. Total fruit and vegetable consumption tends to increase with age, education and income. Among racial and ethnic groups, Blacks have the lowest intake and Mexican Americans have the highest.

Key Issues

New dietary guidance released in 2005 recommended increased intake of fruits and vegetables based on evolving evidence of the benefit of eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables. The average combined recommendation for fruits and vegetables of 10 servings (5 cups) is twice the level targeted by Healthy People 2010 and about twice the current average intake. Additional servings of fruits and vegetables should replace sources of "empty calories" in the diet, such as added sugars (honey, syrup, soft drinks) and solid fats (butter, sour cream), to avoid taking in too many calories. Individuals should be especially encouraged to consume dark green/orange varieties of vegetables such as broccoli or carrots, and legumes or dried beans, such as pinto beans or lentils.

Additional Information on Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

- Choose a Variety of Fruits and Vegetables Daily: Understanding the Complexities
<http://jn.nutrition.org/cgi/content/abstract/131/2/487S>