

Armonia e Bontà



Americans Not Eating Their Fruits and Veggies

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By Daniel Yee

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Fewer than a third of American adults eat the amount of fruits and vegetables the government recommends, a trend that's remained steady for more than a decade, health officials said Thursday. That's "well below" the government's goal of getting 75 percent of Americans to eat two servings of fruits and having half of the population consume three servings of vegetables each day by 2010, said Dr. Larry Cohen of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The diet survey, part of a huge federal health survey of every state, is based on responses from 305,000 adults in 2005. It indicates the country is only about halfway toward meeting its healthy eating goal three years from now.

"We're really concerned with the lack of success in meeting these national goals," said Cohen, who works in CDC's nutrition and physical activity division.

Although the rate of fruit and vegetable consumption has remained unchanged since 1994, health officials said the goal is still within reach.

"We have more work to do over the next few years," said spokeswoman Rachel Ciccarone.

Specifically the survey showed that 27 percent of adults ate vegetables three times a day, and about 33 percent ate fruit twice a day. A serving size is a half-cup for most fruits and vegetables, one cup for leafy greens.

Senior citizens were more likely than others to follow Mom's advice to eat more veggies, with slightly more than a third of that group eating three or more servings each day. Younger adults, age 18 to 24, ate the fewest vegetables. Nearly four-fifths of that age category scraped the veggies to the side of their plates — if they had vegetables on the plate at all.

Likewise, seniors also ate the most fruit, with nearly 46 percent eating two or more servings of fruit daily. People age 35 to 44 ate fruit the least, with fewer than 28 percent eating the recommended amount of fruit each day.

The federal agency said it doesn't know why people aren't eating more veggies or fruits. Cohen said future surveys will ask people what other foods they are eating.

Susan Krause, a clinical dietitian at Hackensack University Medical Center in New Jersey, said people are eating more refined sugars or choosing protein instead of fruits and vegetables.

"There's so much information out there and people get very confused. When they're looking at protein, they feel that's the solution when they're not looking at long-term health benefits," she said. "There's so many fabricated foods now and people are looking at convenience."

Not only are fruits and vegetables lower-calorie, they also have minerals and fiber that help guard against chronic diseases and cancer, the CDC says.

The survey relied on people to report what they were eating. Telephone questioners asked how often they consumed fruit juice, fruit and vegetables. Although Hispanics ate the most fruits (37 percent) compared with blacks and whites, they ate the fewest vegetables, (about 20 percent). Whites, in contrast, ate the fewest fruits (31 percent) but the most veggies (28 percent).

Cohen said the CDC has been working on family and community programs to get more people to eat their veggies. The agency is working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to get more fresh produce into schools.

Krause said health officials should offer people simple options for getting fruits and vegetables in their diets, such as easy recipes in cooking classes and fruit smoothies or shakes in schools.

"If that's a way of getting it in, at least it's in the right direction," she said. "Certainly (whole) fruit is a better choice, but that could be the next alternative."

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