

Most kids eat fruit, veggies daily: CDC

16 July 2014, by Kathleen Doheny, Healthday Reporter



Survey finds 3 out of 4 are getting these healthy foods each day.

(HealthDay)—More than three-quarters of U.S. children eat fruit on any given day, and nearly 92 percent dig into vegetables in a 24-hour period, a new U.S. health survey reveals.

But consumption of fruits and [vegetables](#)—sources of valuable nutrients—declines as kids move from preschool to high school, according to the survey from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

And whether kids' vegetable and fruit consumption meets the Dietary Guidelines for Americans wasn't addressed in the report, said study researcher Samara Joy Nielsen, a nutritional epidemiologist with the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS).

"We weren't looking at how much was being consumed, we were looking at whether they were consuming," Nielsen said.

The [dietary guidelines](#) recommend that kids eat at least one cup each of [fruit and vegetables](#) a day and a variety of both, Nielsen said. The amount needed increases with age and activity level.

For this report, the researchers used data on [children](#) ages 2 to 19 from the 2009-10 National

Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, which asked what people ate over 24 hours.

Ninety percent of children aged 2 to 5 years old ate fruit on any given day, while only six of 10 teens did, according to the report published July 16 in the *NCHS Data Brief*.

Younger children also ate more vegetables on a given day than teens, the survey found. More than 93 percent of children 2 to 11 ate vegetables on a given day, while veggie eating declined to 90 percent among kids 12 to 19 years old.

And French fries were included in that tally.

But, overall, the report seems to be good news, said Dr. Elsie Taveras, chief of general pediatrics at Massachusetts General Hospital for Children in Boston, who was not involved in the study.

"It shows that over 75 percent of children 2 to 19 are consuming fruits and vegetables on a given day," she said.

Taveras was surprised that [vegetable consumption](#) was higher than fruit intake. "I would take that with a little grain of salt," she said.

She said she suspected French fries boosted the rate of vegetable consumption.

Nielsen said about 50 to 60 percent of children ate starchy vegetables, including French fries, on a given day. However, she was pleased to see that about three-quarters of young people ate red and orange vegetables, such as carrots or bell peppers, on a given day.

The investigators found some differences among ethnic groups for fruits, but not for vegetables in general. On any given day, about 82 percent of black children ate fruit compared to three-quarters of whites.

One-fifth of black youths ate melon, citrus or berries

in a 24-hour period, compared to one-third of whites and more than one-quarter of Hispanics, the findings revealed.

Taveras said looking at intake by income status would have provided additional valuable information. Lower-income families often have less access to fresh produce.

Another expert found the report encouraging. "While differences exist within age groups and ethnicity, the fact that kids consume produce is a good step," said Connie Diekman, director of university nutrition at Washington University in St. Louis.

Parents can next encourage variety and greater intake, Diekman said.

Here are three ways to do that, said Taveras: Make all snacks fruits or vegetables. Include [fruits and vegetables](#) as part of every meal. And start these practices early to shape children's taste preferences.

More information: For more about the benefits of fruits and vegetables, visit the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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