



COMMUNITY HEALTH DATA BASE

An Information Service of Public Health Management Corporation

Data findings

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION IN SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

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Fruit and vegetable consumption are key components of a healthy lifestyle. Individuals who eat greater amounts of fruits and vegetables, which provide essential nutrients and fiber, are less likely than those who eat minimal amounts of fruits and vegetables to have chronic diseases. High levels of fruit and vegetable intake are associated with lower risk of type 2 diabetes, some cancers, and cardiovascular diseases.*

The CDC's 5-A-Day program recommending 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day has been revised to offer personalized recommendations. At www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov, individualized guidelines on fruit and vegetable intake are offered based on recommended caloric intake. Guidelines are now based on an individual's age, gender, and level of physical activity.

For women getting low amounts of daily exercise, the CDC recommends between 3.5 and 4.5 cups of fruits and vegetables per day, varying with age. For men with low levels of physical activity, the CDC recommends between 4.5 and 5 cups of fruits and vegetables daily. Individuals who are more active may require additional calories and, as part of a healthy diet, more servings of fruits and vegetables are recommended. For some people, the minimum recommendation is now less than 5 servings** each day, and while many in our region are meeting these goals, a greater percentage are not. This article uses information from PHMC's Community Health Data Base 2006 Household Health Survey to examine fruit and vegetable consumption among residents of Southeastern Pennsylvania.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION AMONG ADULTS (18+) IN SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Overall, about three-quarters of adults of Southeastern Pennsylvania are consuming less than four servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

- Philadelphia residents are more likely than residents of suburban counties to consume fewer than four servings of fruits and vegetables daily (81.5% of Philadelphia adults consume less than 4 servings, compared to 67.6% of Chester County residents). An estimated 867,000 Philadelphia residents consume fewer than four servings each day (Figure 1).
- Men are more likely than women to consume fewer than four servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Eight in ten (80.8%) men and seven in ten (70.7%) women in Southeastern Pennsylvania consume fewer than four servings of fruits and vegetables each day.



- People living in poverty are more likely to consume fewer than four servings of fruits and vegetables than are non-poor. Approximately 252,000 SEPA residents in poverty (86.3%) are not meeting the minimum recommendations. The data are similar for those receiving food stamps.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION AMONG CHILDREN IN SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

The CDC’s daily recommended servings of fruits and vegetables vary more for children than for adults. Recommendations range from two and a half to three and a half cups of fruits and vegetables for children 6 – 10 years old with the lowest levels of physical activity. More active children require additional servings of fruits and vegetables.

- Nearly half (44.8%) of children between 6 and 10 years old in Southeastern Pennsylvania consume fewer than 3 servings of fruits and vegetables per day. This represents 101,000 children who are not getting their daily recommended servings.

For less active teenagers (13-17 years), CDC recommendations vary from three and a half to five cups per day.

- Three quarters (75.8%) of teenagers in Southeastern Pennsylvania eat fewer than 4 servings of fruits and vegetables daily. This represents 218,000 teenagers in the region.

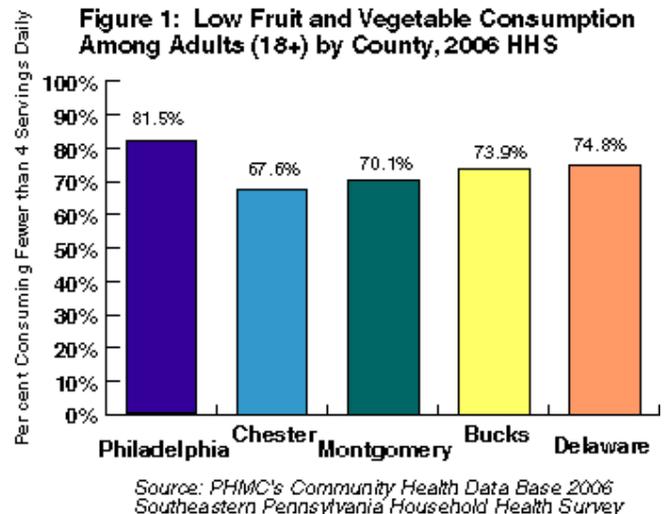
FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION AND HEALTH

Research has shown that fresh fruit and vegetable consumption may contribute to positive health outcomes. Southeastern Pennsylvania adults who consume 4 or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day are more likely than those who eat fewer servings to report that they are in excellent health. Specifically, 41.8% of SEPA adults (18+) who consume 4 or more servings report excellent health, compared to 30.4% of those who consumer fewer than 4 servings per day (Figure 2).

SUMMARY

The CDC’s guidelines for fruit and vegetable consumption have changed to offer personalized recommendations. However, many in our area are not meeting even the minimum guidelines for produce intake. In the coming year, PHMC’s Community Health Data Base will be able to track changes in fruit and vegetable intake using new data from PHMC’s Community Health Data Base 2008 Household Health Survey. New data will be available on a wide range of topics including, fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity, and access to quality produce.

Stay tuned for our data release in February. For more information about the CDC’s guidelines for fruit and vegetable intake, and for personalized recommendations based on your age, gender and activity level go to www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov. For information on the Community Health Data Base’s Household Health Survey, please contact Rose Malinowski Weingartner at rosemw@phmc.org.



* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005. 6th Edition, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 2005.

**Servings are now described as cups. In previous guidelines, quantities varied by food type.

