



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Eat Your Fruits and Veggies

Fruit and Vegetable Consumption Among High School Students — United States, 2010

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Parents have been asking kids to eat their fruits and vegetables for years. A recent survey found that many high-school-aged kids aren't listening.

Dr. Sonia Kim is an epidemiologist with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of getting teenagers to eat a healthy diet. Welcome to the show, Sonia.

[Dr. Kim] Thank you. I'm glad to be here.

[Dr. Gaynes] Sonia, are teenagers eating enough fruits and vegetables?

[Dr. Kim] The short answer is no. We found that one in four teens were eating fruit less than once a day and one in three were eating vegetables less than once a day.

[Dr. Gaynes] What is the daily recommended amount of fruits and vegetables?

[Dr. Kim] Well, for teens who get less than 30 minutes of exercise, girls should get one and a half cups of fruit and two and a half cups of vegetables each day, and boys should get two cups of fruit and three cups of vegetables each day. One cup is about one medium apple, eight strawberries, or one large tomato. For kids who get 30 minutes or more of exercise, those recommendations would be a little bit higher.

[Dr. Gaynes] Sonia, why is it so tough to get teenagers to eat a healthy diet?

[Dr. Kim] Well, one reason could be that their schools and community environments aren't supportive of healthy choices, meaning that there aren't enough fruits and vegetables around them to make it easy to eat those foods during meals and snacks.

[Dr. Gaynes] Why is it so important to eat a diet that's high in fruits and vegetables?

[Dr. Kim] Fruits and vegetables are important for maintaining a healthy weight. In general, they're low in calories and high in fiber and water. A diet high in fruits and vegetables reduces the risk of chronic diseases, like heart disease, some cancers, stroke, and diabetes. And we're especially concerned about the dietary behaviors of children because we know these habits follow people into adulthood. We want to establish healthy habits at a young age.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some strategies for getting young people to eat more fruits and vegetables?

[Dr. Kim] Well, we can all do something to help teens eat more fruits and vegetables. To teens, I would say, just try to eat fruits and vegetables more often. Reach for a fruit for a snack and add vegetables to your meals. To parents, have plenty of fruits and vegetables around the house. Make sure they're easy for your kids to reach for and to eat. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables yourself and get kids involved in choosing and cooking meals with these foods. And to everyone, I would suggest you support your local school's efforts to provide a variety of fruits and vegetables to students throughout the day, efforts like salad bars, gardens, and farm-to-school programs. These activities give students opportunities to learn about and to practice making healthy eating choices.

[Dr. Gaynes] Sonia, where can listeners get more information about teaching kids to eat a healthy diet?

[Dr. Kim] I'd invite listeners to go to www.cdc.gov/nutrition.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Sonia. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Sonia Kim about the importance of teenagers eating a diet high in fruits and vegetables.

Remember, parents should model good dietary habits and support efforts by schools to increase access to healthy foods, such as salad bars, gardens, and farm-to-school programs. These activities help kids make healthy eating choices.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.