



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Fruits and Vegetables Every Day and Your Health

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

[Matthew Reynolds] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly broadcast of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Matthew Reynolds. Most of us know that eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables helps lower our risk for chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease. Eating fruits and vegetables as part of a reduced-calorie diet is also a good way to help people manage their weight. Most fruits and vegetables are naturally low in calories and provide essential nutrients and dietary fiber. A recent study from the CDC shows that very few adults are eating the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables on a daily basis. Here to talk with us about the importance of making a variety of fruits and vegetables part of your meals and snacks is Dr. Larry Cohen from CDC's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity. Dr. Cohen is the author of a recently published report on fruit and vegetable consumption in the United States. Welcome to the show, Dr. Cohen.

[Dr. Cohen] Thank you, Matthew. It's great to be here.

[Matthew Reynolds] Dr. Cohen, you've just finished a study about the fruits and vegetables Americans eat – how much and how often. This seems like an enormous task. How did you do it?

[Dr. Cohen] Well, we used data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, which is an on-going telephone health survey that tracks health conditions and risk behaviors in the United States. The survey asks participants six different questions about their daily consumption of fruits and vegetables, and then using this data, we calculated the percentage of adults who consumed fruits two or more times per day and vegetables three or more times per day.

[Matthew Reynolds] Dr. Cohen, most of us remember that, as children, we were often reminded to eat our fruits and vegetables. Can you tell us why it's important to include plenty of fruits and vegetables in our meals and snacks every day?

[Dr. Cohen] There's a growing body of research that shows fruits and vegetables are critical to promoting good health. Also, fruits and vegetables contain essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber that may help protect you from chronic diseases, including stroke, heart disease and some cancers. Finally, most fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat and calories, and are filling; substituting fruits and vegetables for higher-calorie foods in your diet can be part of a weight loss strategy.

[Matthew Reynolds] I'm interested in hearing more about your study. What did you learn?

[Dr. Cohen] As of 2005, we found that only about one-third of adults ate 2 or more fruits a day, and only about one-quarter of adults ate 3 or more vegetables a day.

[Matthew Reynolds] Did your study show differences in the kinds and amounts of foods people eat? Was the consumption of fruits and vegetables similar for the people you talked with?

[Dr. Cohen] Interestingly, fruit and vegetable consumption did vary by race, sex, age, state of residence, and Body Mass Index (or BMI). We found that women eat more fruit and vegetables than men. Hispanics eat more fruit than other racial and ethnic groups, while Whites eat more vegetables.

[Matthew Reynolds] That's interesting. Do you have any idea why there were these differences?

[Dr. Cohen] We're really not sure why fruit and vegetable consumption varied. It might be due to lack of access to high quality produce, possibly higher costs, or even lack of time for preparation. It shows there may be more of a challenge to convince certain groups of people to make fruits and vegetables part of their meals and snacks every day. But, even with these differences, our overall finding was that most Americans are not eating enough fruits and vegetables

[Matthew Reynolds] Based on what you learned from your study, what recommendations would you make?

Dr. Cohen:

It's important for us to help people know how to make changes to improve choices for meals and snacks. Fresh fruits and vegetables are one option, however, all forms count, including frozen, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables; drinks that are 100% juice; dried fruit snacks; fruit that's added to cereal or low-fat yogurt; pre-cut vegetable snacks; and ready-to-eat salad greens. You can find other tips and great recipes at www.cdc.gov/fruitsandveggies .

[Matthew Reynolds] Those seem like great suggestions. Well, Dr. Cohen, thank you for taking the time to talk with us today.

[Dr. Cohen] You're welcome, Matthew. Thanks for inviting me.

[Matthew Reynolds] Well, that's it for this week's show. Don't forget to join us next week. Until then, be well. This is Matthew Reynolds for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family and your community, please visit www.cdc.gov.