



National Action Plan

TO PROMOTE HEALTH THROUGH INCREASED
FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION

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National Action Plan to Promote Health Through Increased Fruit and Vegetable Consumption



New Approach Needed

More than half of Americans know they need to eat at least five daily servings of fruits and vegetables.¹ Yet just one in five achieves that minimum,² despite years of efforts by countless government, nonprofit, and commercial organizations. Clearly, a new approach is required if Americans are to meet the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which include a large increase in the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables: 5 to 13 servings daily are now recommended,³ up from the 5 to 9 recommendations in 2000.

People who consume generous amounts of fruits and vegetables as part of a healthful diet are likely to have reduced risk of chronic diseases, including stroke and perhaps other cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer.³ And, because they're low in calories and high in fiber, fruits and vegetables can help control weight.⁴

While fruit and vegetable intake has increased over the years, the rate of this increase is very low.

In fact, at the current rate, it would take over a century to close the consumption gap.⁵

Development of Plan

This National Action Plan proposes an integrated framework of policy,[†] marketing and communication strategies that all entities—large and small—that produce, provide, serve or regulate food can use to help Americans obtain, prepare and consume fruits and vegetables—and in so doing achieve good health.

Produce for Better Health Foundation developed this plan with input from a variety of food, nutrition, marketing, communications and policy leaders and conducted a thorough assessment of the scientific literature. Over 75 strategies, organized in nine different settings have been identified to more aggressively create an environment where Americans can increase their fruit and vegetable consumption.

Objectives of the National Action Plan

1. Increase the accessibility and desirability of fruits and vegetables, by making them tasty, attractive, convenient, affordable, plentiful and easily available at all eating and snacking occasions.
2. Offer practical strategies to help increase individuals' ability to obtain and prepare meals and snacks rich in fruits and vegetables. The single strongest independent predictor of fruit and vegetable intake is self-efficacy (confidence in one's ability to eat fruits and vegetables in a variety of settings), followed by knowledge of dietary recommendations and taste preferences.⁶
3. Change Americans' attitudes and habits so that they include fruits and vegetables at every eating occasion. Key to making this change is identifying, communicating and delivering the benefits of fruits and vegetables that consumers find most important, in a way that is exciting, enticing and produces positive behavior change.

National Action Plan Goal

Put into action at the national, state and local levels a set of policy, marketing, business, public health and communication strategies that can close the gap between actual and recommended fruit and vegetable consumption.

[†]"Policy" is broadly defined to include public- and private-sector plans of action designed to facilitate increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables in the United States. It is not limited to public policy actions undertaken by the U.S. government.

Approach to Behavior Change

To increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, people need *motivation, opportunity and ability*.⁷ Appropriate communication efforts often can provide *motivation* and sometimes improve a person’s *ability* to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, but marketing and policy are necessary to change the environment to one that offers increased *opportunities* for fruit and vegetable consumption—an environment where the healthy choice is the easy choice.

Environmental and policy approaches designed to make it easier for people to make healthy food choices are a critical component of population-wide behavior change.⁸ When compared to individual nutrition behavior change strategies, environmental and policy changes are also less expensive and less labor-intensive relative to the number of people they affect.⁹

Timeline for Implementation of Plan

The strategies presented in this plan span a wide range of actions that can be taken by an equally broad array of entities. Individuals can take personal responsibility for making better choices; places serving food (cafeterias, restaurants, schools, worksites, entertainment venues and others) and government agencies can make a myriad of changes to increase the availability and accessibility of fruits and vegetables. Some of the strategies presented here include changes that can take effect within days, weeks or months, to others that will take years to craft and implement. To gauge progress, Produce for Better Health Foundation will regularly scan the environment, examining fruit and vegetable consumption figures and indicators of progress, from the frequency of restaurants incorporating fruits and vegetables on menus to federal efforts to increase funding for fruit and vegetable promotion. In addition, entities implementing strategies to increase consumption can evaluate their outcomes with appropriate measures and ideally share their results to develop an inventory of model programs.

Strategies to Increase Fruit and Vegetable Intake

The strategies outlined on the following pages are a combination of existing practices for which there is substantial evidence of effectiveness and fresh ideas from some of the nation’s leaders in food and nutrition policy, marketing and communications.

Strategies are included for the following settings:

- Marketing to children
- Supermarkets and retailers
- Fruit and vegetables growers, processors and shippers
- Cafeterias, restaurants and other food establishments
- Schools, daycare centers and youth camps
- Worksites
- Health care industry and health organizations
- Communities
- Research entities
- Federal policies
 - Food and nutrition assistance programs
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - Food and Drug Administration

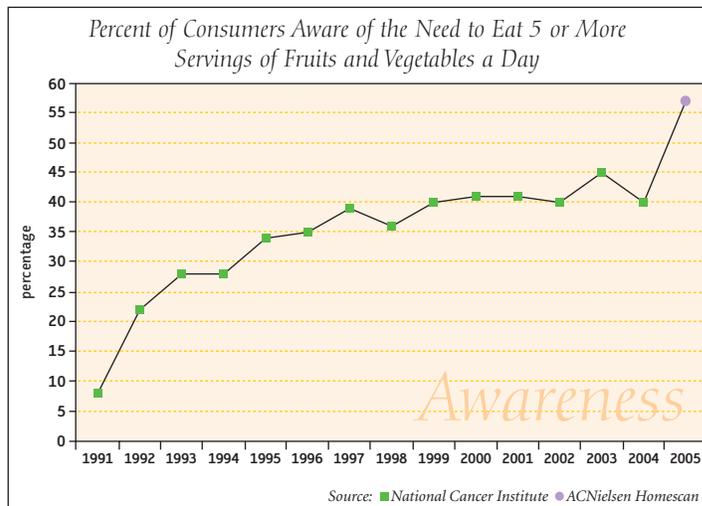
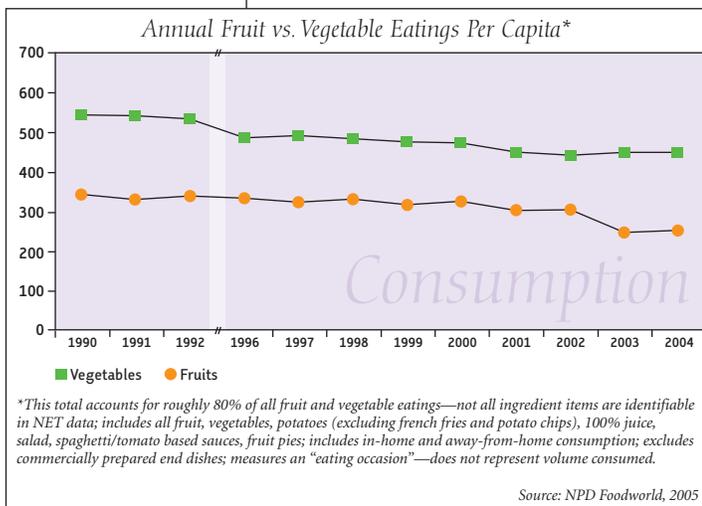
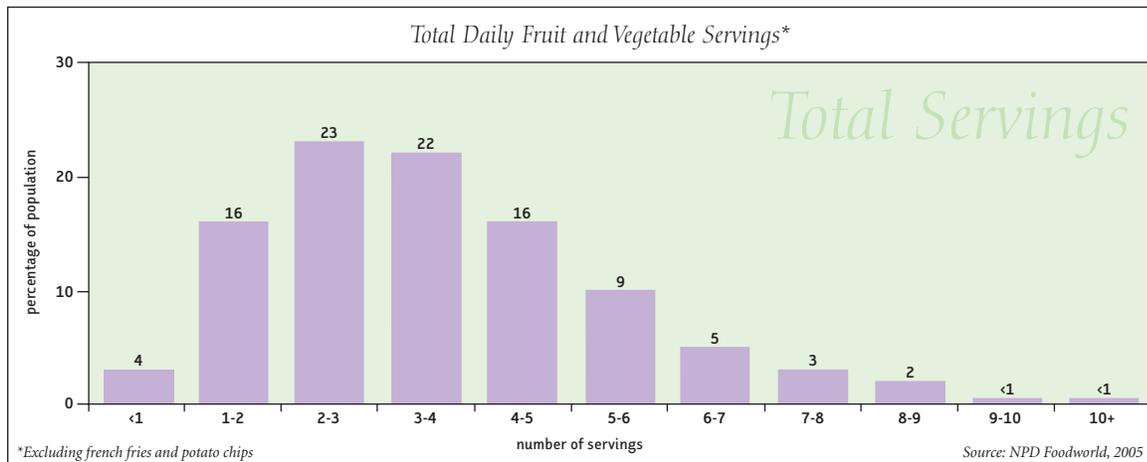
Convenience—impacting consumption trends

- Convenience is an increasingly major driver of food choice—in 2001, 47% of those surveyed agreed that “convenience is most important in the foods I eat.”
- Only half (51%) agree that it is important to eat full and regular meals;
- The number of dishes in the average dinner has declined, with the side dish—historically the place for vegetables—being dropped the most.
- More meals are consumed away from home—limiting opportunities for and selections of fruits and vegetables.

Source: State of the Plate: Study on America’s Consumption of Fruits and Vegetables, Produce for Better Health Foundation, 2003

Current Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

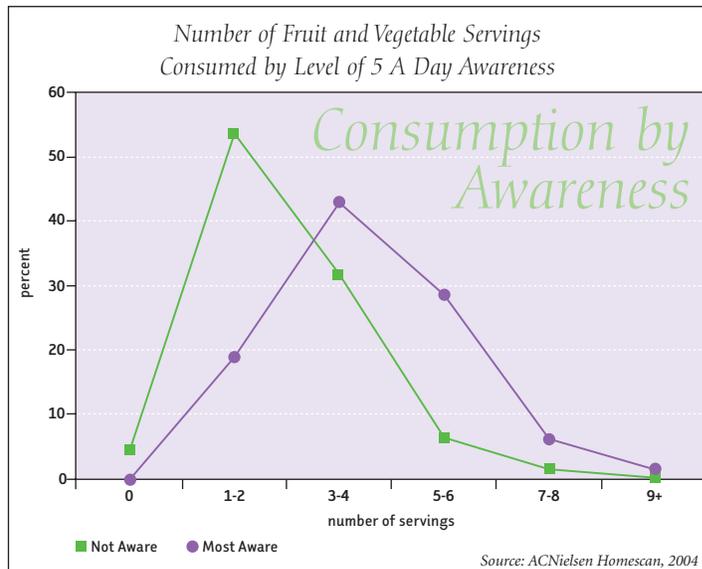
The average American eats only 3.6 daily servings of fruits and vegetables: 2.2 servings of vegetables and 1.4 servings of fruits.¹⁰ Average fruit and vegetable consumption has remained relatively flat for more than 10 years, yet consumers who are more aware of the need to eat five or more servings daily are more likely to do so.



Who eats more and why

- Only 20% of Americans eat 5 or more servings a day.
- Teen boys, men 45+ and women 55+ are the heaviest consumers of fruits and vegetables.
- Older people consume fruits and vegetables more frequently (in part because they consume more meals at home) and teen boys and men consume larger portions.
- Only 13% of families with children reach 5 or more servings per day. Both children and parents drive this non-achievement; all family members consume about 10% fewer fruits and vegetables when “Mom” works outside the home, when the need for convenience is even greater.

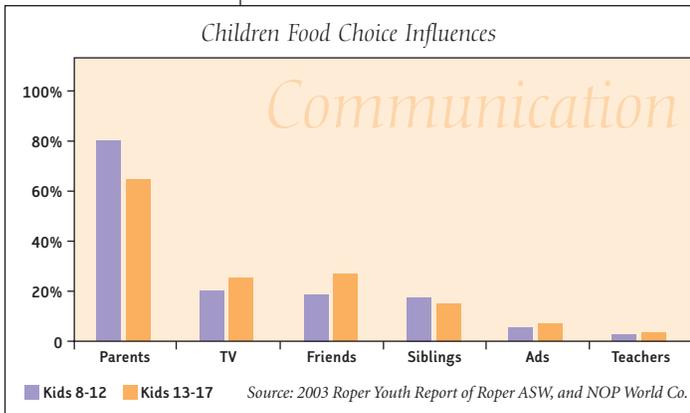
Source: State of the Plate: Study on America’s Consumption of Fruits and Vegetables, Produce for Better Health Foundation, 2003



Marketing to Children

Food choices are affected by many factors, but one of the key areas impacting food choice—especially among children—is food marketing. Foods high in calories and low in nutrients are often marketed extensively to children, but there are significantly fewer marketing initiatives that promote healthy food choices like fruits and vegetables. Marketers should act responsibly in promoting healthy foods and a healthy lifestyle, and may respond to incentive-based approaches to limit inappropriate advertising and instead emphasize healthy products. In addition:

- The Federal Trade Commission should have greater authority and adequate funding to develop and implement, along with Department of Health and Human Services, nutrition standards for foods that can be advertised and marketed to children.
- An incentive-based system (such as greater tax deductions) should be developed to encourage companies to promote nutrient-dense foods including fruits and vegetables when advertising to children.
- Entertainment media, particularly motion picture companies, television shows and networks targeting children and youth, should promote fruit and vegetable consumption in their programming and through their choices of partners for product tie-in promotions.



Children are establishing poor fruit and vegetable habits at an early age

- French fries were the most commonly consumed vegetable for infants and toddlers 15 to 24 months.¹¹
- Fried potatoes, including french fries, make up 46% of vegetable servings for children 2 to 19 years old.¹²
- The average 6 to 11 year old eats only 3.5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day, achieving only half the recommended seven servings per day for this age group.¹³
- On any given day, 45% of children eat no fruit, and 20% eat less than one serving of vegetables.¹³
- On any given day, 25-30% of infants and toddlers ages 9-24 months do not eat any fruit and 20-25% do not eat vegetables.¹¹

Supermarkets and Retailers (Grocery Stores, Super Centers, Convenience Stores)

Supermarkets and other retailers offer an unprecedented opportunity to increase consumers' access to convenient fruit and vegetables, and to provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to increase their purchases and consumption. Given that there are nearly 34,000 supermarkets nationwide, such venues have the potential to deliver more than 500 million messages each week, through advertising and in-store impressions, that promote eating more fruits and vegetables.

- Assure that all fruit and vegetable products are consistently of high quality and cared for appropriately at the point of purchase.
- Increase availability and marketing of pre-cut fruits and vegetables.
- Enhance and expand the use of industry media, marketing, and promotional strategies such as coupons, cross product marketing, loyalty marketing, sales events, billboards and radio to promote increased consumption of fruits and vegetables.

- Use integrated produce department promotions such as point-of-sale materials, periodic samplings and recipe demonstrations, give-aways, discounting, supporting collateral signage and recipe cards, implemented over a reasonably long period of time (e.g., three months or more).
- Develop training and educational programs for retail associates to deliver fruit and vegetable messages; training components could include retail quality and freshness, handling, storage, health benefits and consumer education.
- Share best practices within the industry on effective fruit and vegetable marketing activities.
- Offer and promote convenient, ready-made meals or meal solutions for shoppers that include an abundance of fruits and vegetables.
- Expand the fruit and vegetable message beyond traditional grocery retail venues—such as into convenience stores and dollar stores; as well as into other retail departments within supermarkets—such as promoting fruits and vegetables in the canned and frozen areas, and 100% juice in the dairy section.

Delivering Skills and Increasing Sales

Consumers entering the produce department encounter a display featuring that week's easy fruit- or vegetable-rich recipe. A staff member demonstrates how easy it is to make the recipe. The recipe itself and all products necessary to prepare it are on the accompanying display. Signage promotes the benefits consumers attach to eating fruits and vegetables. When consumers check out with purchases from the display, they are given a coupon for a future shopping trip, with a note that their fruit and vegetable purchases earned them these savings.

Fruit and Vegetable Growers, Processors and Shippers

These groups can increase demand for fruits and vegetables by focusing on increasing product appeal and packaging products so that consumers can use them easily and cost-efficiently.

- Assure consistently excellent taste profile before selling products to customers.
- Make fruits and vegetables more convenient and portable, to easily fit into consumers' busy lives (i.e.: single- and smaller-portion packaging).
- Develop and use packaging features to extend shelf life, improve marketability of products, and make it easier for consumers to purchase and use products successfully (such as resealable packages or packages that tell a customer when a product is past its prime to help ensure consumers receive only the freshest, best-tasting produce available).
- Innovate in products, packaging and preparation to make fruits and vegetables main dishes rather than side dishes.
- Develop affordable, effective technologies for selling pre-cut, conveniently packaged fruits and vegetables at venues such as convenience stores, food kiosks in transportation centers and sports venues.
- Use packaging or stickers to provide consumers with simple recipes and serving suggestions, appropriate health messages, or product handling and storage information.

Taste: 84% of consumers surveyed said that taste was the most important factor they consider in purchasing fruits and vegetables.

—Source: ACNielsen, 2004

Billboards: Stores located nearest 5 A Day billboards had between a 4% and 20% increase in fruit or vegetable produce sales compared with control stores in the chain that were not located near the 5 A Day billboards.

Source: *Increasing Fruit and Vegetable Intake Through Innovative Marketing, Nutrition Today (Jan-Feb, 2003)*

Direct Mail: High-value coupons increase sales: targeted direct-marketing promotions resulted in an increase in total produce purchases; shoppers were targeted based on their produce purchase practices. Coupon redemption rates were good for all targeted shoppers (low, medium and high frequency produce purchasers) and also resulted in overall increase in non-targeted produce sales, indicating that coupon promotions increase awareness of produce in general.

Source: *Increasing Fruit and Vegetable Intake Through Innovative Marketing, Nutrition Today (Jan-Feb, 2003)*

Cafeterias, Restaurants and Other Food Establishments

“The most important food-related lifestyle change of the past two decades is probably the increase in consumption of food prepared away from home.”

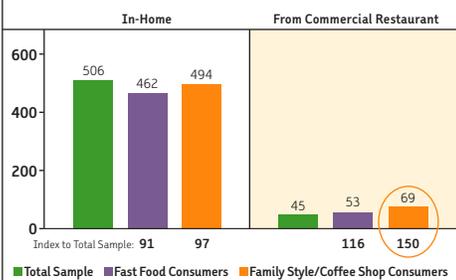
—Source: ERS Report: *Understanding Fruit and Vegetable Choices; Economic and Behavioral Influences, October 2004*

As Americans increasingly eat more food prepared away from home, the role of cafeterias, restaurants and other food establishments becomes increasingly important. While some have made strides in offering more fruits and vegetables, an enormous “opportunity gap” remains. Food prepared away from home makes up about a third of the average American’s daily calories, yet it accounts for less than half a serving of fruit, and just 1¼ servings of vegetables.¹⁴ Food establishments can help close the opportunity gap, attract more customers who are looking for fruit and vegetable options and improve their bottom line.

- Increase the number of fruit and vegetable menu items and fruit and vegetable-rich entrees in restaurants and through vending.
- Attractively merchandise and aggressively market fresh fruits and vegetables in season.
- Promote cafeteria-based fruit and vegetable promotions.
- Encourage a “world cuisines” approach to highlighting a strong role for produce in foodservice—drawing on cuisines around the world that put fruits and vegetables more center of the plate in their culinary traditions.
- Involve chefs in helping identify key culinary techniques, flavor approaches, and menu strategies to put more fruits and vegetables in front of customers.
- Train chefs in restaurants, hotels and central kitchens on how to create exciting and tasty fruit and vegetable appetizers, entrees and desserts.
- Encourage trial of fruit and vegetable offerings through taste tests, discount coupons and direct mail for fruit and vegetable-rich menu items.
- Provide calorie and other key nutrition information for all menu items.
- Include fruits and vegetables as part of “value meals” in place of low-nutrition options.
- Include more fruits and vegetables (non-fried) as part of children’s menu/offerings and meals.

Annual Fruit and Vegetable Eatings Per Capita

The consumer eats fruits and vegetables 506 times annually per capita in the home, yet eats fruits and vegetables only 45 times away from home annually.



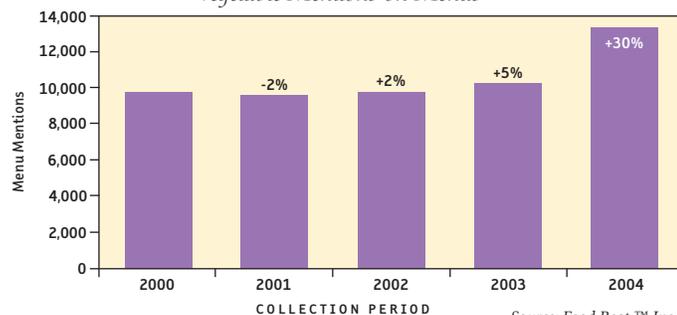
Americans are increasingly relying on restaurants to feed themselves and their families.

In 1970, Americans spent just 26% of their food dollars on restaurant meals and other foods prepared outside their homes. Today, we spend almost half (46%) our food dollars on away-from-home foods. The average American consumes about one-third of his or her calories from foods from restaurants and other foodservice establishments.¹⁴

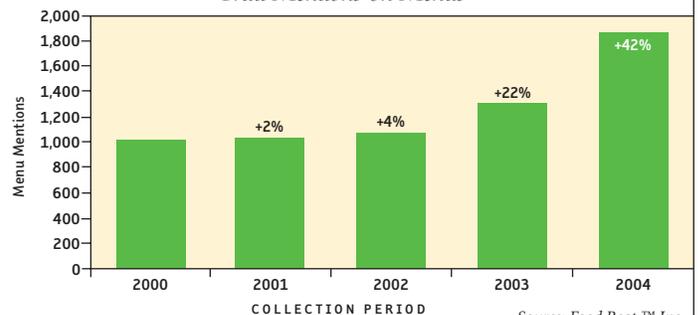
67% of all individuals consume an item at a fast food restaurant at least once in an average two-week period—yet only 18% of individuals consume a fruit or vegetable from a fast food outlet regularly.¹⁵

55% of all individuals visit a family style/coffee shop restaurant at least once in an average two-week period—yet just 30% of individuals consume a fruit or vegetable from this type of outlet regularly.¹⁶

Vegetable Mentions on Menu



Fruit Mentions on Menus



We must create and maintain an environment where fruits and vegetables are available and accessible every time a person eats or drinks—an environment where the healthy choice is the easy choice.

Schools (Preschool through Universities), Daycare Centers and Youth Camps

Providing ample fruits and vegetables and encouraging their consumption is critical to establishing healthy eating habits in children, teens and young adults. While some of these settings also fall under the umbrella of federal nutrition assistance programs, there are steps that these entities can take to promote fruits and vegetables and provide greater access to these products.

- Increase the availability of fruits and vegetables on-site by implementing policies that mandate inclusion of fruits and vegetables at all eating occasions and purchase locations (in cafeterias, among à la carte offerings, in vending machines, and at all activities, functions and sporting events where food is served).
- Introduce new fruit and vegetable offerings in fun and innovative ways by increasing the appeal of offerings. For example, offer salad bars or pre-plated salads.
- Encourage the use of produce from local farmers' markets and expand farm-to-school/daycare/camp initiatives.
- Implement nutrition standards for foods and beverages served or sold on site (See school wellness policies described under Federal Food and Drug Nutrition Assistance Programs).
- Develop or implement programs to teach skills and improve availability of fruits and vegetables that are focused on the interests of targeted youth, parents and caregivers, and involve the classroom, foodservice personnel and families. Effective activities include student taste tests, games and contests, and public recognition for reaching a goal and/or group contests. Seeking community partners (media, farmers' markets) may increase program effectiveness.
- Ensure that fruit and vegetable offerings are competitively priced.
- Train foodservice workers to properly prepare, store and handle fruits and vegetables.
- Expand the Department of Defense Fresh program to allow more schools to source produce through this existing distribution channel.¹⁷
- Expand the USDA Fruit and Vegetable Snack program in schools.¹⁸

Worksites

Worksites provide many opportunities to reinforce and promote healthy lifestyle behaviors. Whether through a broad worksite wellness program or through specific initiatives, employers can create a workplace environment that provides many occasions to increase employees' motivation, opportunity and ability to choose fruits and vegetables. Promoting and facilitating healthy eating at work is an excellent investment. Over time, it can save costs from diet-related diseases and lost productivity while boosting overall employee health and morale.

- Implement catering policies for all company events and conferences to require that menus feature plentiful fruits and vegetables and are prepared healthfully.
- Provide a wide variety of fruits and vegetables in cafeterias and vending machines and at company functions and meetings. In particular, government-sponsored cafeterias and government worksites can impact millions of federal, state and local government workers, enabling them to eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Use incentive-based approaches to encourage the sale of fruits and vegetables in vending machines and cafeterias (i.e., pricing strategies that promote fruit and vegetable sales).
- Assure that worksite food establishments provide calorie and other key nutrition information for all menu items at point of purchase, including the number of servings or quantity of fruits and vegetables served.
- Develop fruit and vegetable worksite initiatives that include activities that create awareness, motivation, social support and increased availability of fruits and vegetables.

"Presently we have over 500 studies demonstrating improved employee health through corporate wellness programs. In addition, we have approximately 40 studies demonstrating health promotion's ability to impact the bottom line."

—Source: Absolute Advantage—the worksite wellness magazine, 2002

The Health Care Industry and Health Organizations

Many organizations and professionals deliver health messages to individuals via a variety of forums; efforts to increase fruit and vegetable consumption are often consistent with their missions and in many instances may further their goals.

- Train health care providers such as pediatricians, nurses and family practitioners to deliver effective, behaviorally-focused programs and messages about fruits and vegetables to all populations and subgroups. Provide appropriately tailored messages for specific populations such as children and persons with particular health conditions such as overweight, hypertension, high cholesterol and/or diabetes.
- Include consistent, behaviorally-focused messages about dietary recommendations for fruits and vegetables and practical tips for increasing consumption in guidelines and materials produced by professional and health voluntary organizations (i.e., the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute’s public education programs, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s folic acid/birth defects campaign; recommendations and guidelines promulgated by the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society and the American Diabetes Association).
- Develop an incentive-based approach for public and private health insurers to promote fruit and vegetable intake among subscribers (Medicaid, Medicare, state children’s health insurance programs, and federal, state and local, and private insurers).
- Increase advocacy skills of public health providers to bring about environmental changes and support policies that promote greater access to fruits and vegetables.



Communities

Any community can find a way to encourage, facilitate and support increased fruit and vegetable consumption. Some ideas:

- Assure that community wellness efforts—developed in concert with the local public health community—include environmental changes that improve access to fruits and vegetables that are reasonably priced, tasty and convenient and that make produce available in local stores, in or near work sites, and near mass transit sites.
- Encourage local organizations and entities to serve more fruits and vegetables at functions where food and/or beverages are served (churches and other houses of worship, entertainment venues, sporting events etc.).
- Work with churches, food banks and other community organizations to provide fruits and vegetables to homebound older adults.
- Partner with local agriculture agencies, schools, parks, recreation and community centers to encourage product availability through farmers’ markets, vending, community gardens and farm-to-school efforts.

Research Entities—Federal, Private, Nonprofit or University-Based

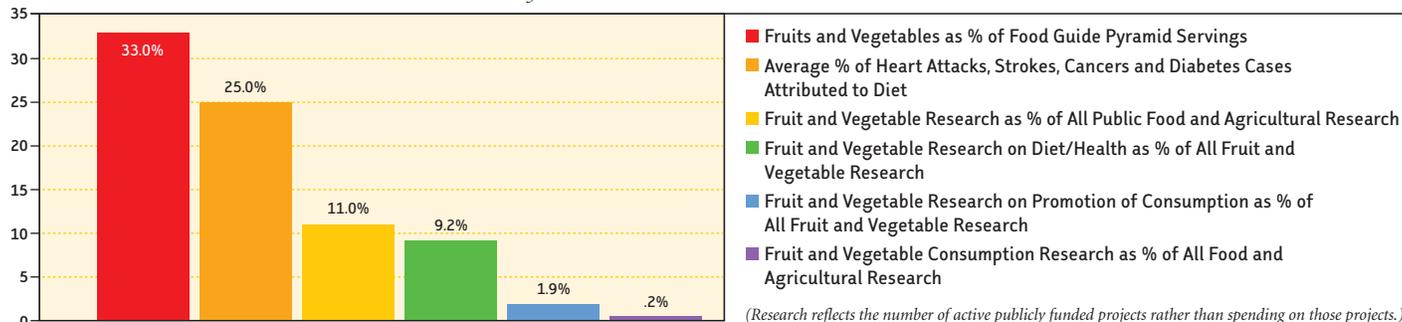
Federal research efforts should reflect the importance of the role of fruits and vegetables in reducing the risk of chronic disease. There is an urgent need to increase support and leverage research, especially federally-sponsored research, to overcome actual and perceived barriers to increased consumption of fruits and vegetables. Many opportunities exist to enhance research policy priorities in a variety of areas—from food processing and technology to human behavior and economic modeling research. Areas identified below primarily pertain to federal fruit and vegetable research efforts, but can be applied more broadly to include other research entities.

- Promote collaboration among federal agencies that conduct nutrition research to develop a coordinated research agenda. This effort requires an increased level and sustained commitment of funds and resources.
- Include an independent assessment of federal nutrition assistance and health programs and policies as well as agricultural programs and policies to determine the extent to which agriculture policy is consistent with health policy; such an assessment should include recommendations on how to better align federal health and agriculture policy.
- Support increased emphasis on fruit and vegetable research that focuses on increasing consumer consumption.
- Fund agricultural research initiatives that address convenience, taste, versatility and longer-term product quality issues (from farm to table) regarding fruits and vegetables.
- Support increased research into the role of fruits and vegetables in weight management (including preparation techniques, when and how fruits and vegetables are consumed, and satiety functions).
- Support improvements in monitoring systems for fruit and vegetable consumption.
- Support studies of the relative roles various factors play in fruit and vegetable consumption among children and adults—availability, price, education, type of produce, type of other foods offered, age, parental involvement and media messages.
- Develop measurement and impact tools to evaluate the effectiveness of various fruit and vegetable consumer marketing initiatives.
- Establish and promote best practices of fruit and vegetable interventions in worksites, schools, and other settings outlined in this document.

“Given the potential savings in costs, human suffering, and premature deaths, the federal government has made available a grossly insufficient amount of federal funding for research and promotion of dietary improvement, especially with regard to fruits and vegetables.”

—Source: *The Fruit and Vegetable Consumption Challenge: How Federal Spending Falls Short of Addressing Public Health Needs, Produce for Better Health Foundation, 2002*

The Amount of Fruit and Vegetable Research Does Not Reflect the Importance of Fruits and Vegetables in Maintaining a Balanced Diet to Prevent Serious Chronic Illnesses



Source: *The Fruit and Vegetable Consumption Challenge: How Federal Spending Falls Short of Addressing Public Health Needs, Produce for Better Health Foundation, 2002*

Closing the fruit and vegetable consumption gap requires concerted efforts by a variety of national, state and local public, private and non-profit organizations.

Despite the many advances in nutrition knowledge and science that have occurred since the inception of the WIC program, there have been no significant changes to the WIC food package in almost 30 years. WIC food packages today are inconsistent with federal dietary recommendations and are short of fruits and vegetables.

Federal Policies

The federal government plays a critical role in promoting the health and well being of all Americans. While efforts to educate consumers about healthy choices must continue to be promoted and strengthened at the federal level, other strategies are needed to address access, availability, cost, convenience, taste and the various factors that impact consumption. Aligning federal nutrition and agriculture policies with federal health policies—like the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans—is essential in helping consumers meet fruit and vegetable consumption goals.

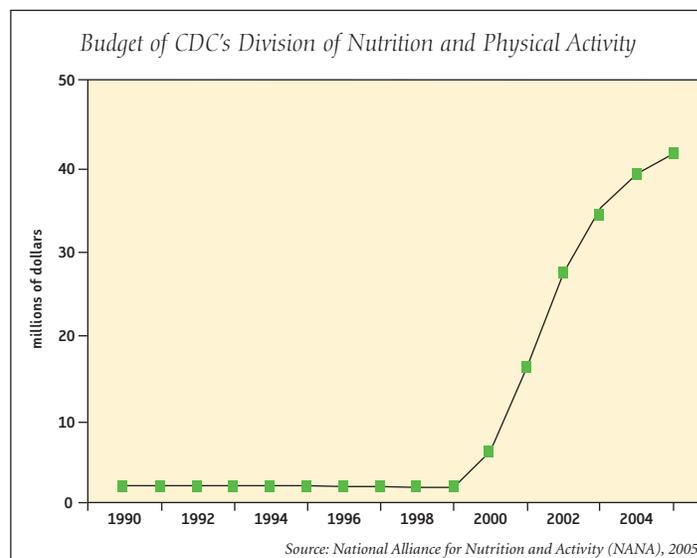
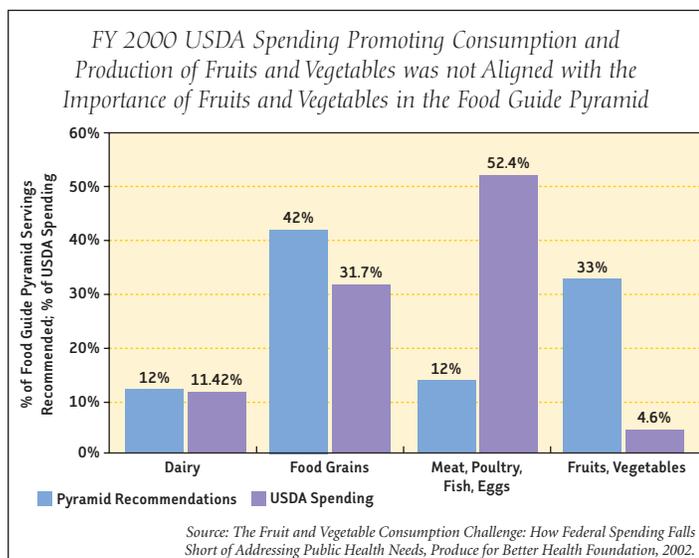
Many federal agencies can take steps to support efforts to increase fruit and vegetable consumption:

- Assure that sufficient federal funding is available to develop and evaluate a coordinated long-term national communication campaign that includes paid media placement of tested messages to motivate Americans to meet their new dietary recommendations for fruits and vegetables.
- Assure that all federal agencies include fruit and vegetable messaging and procurement practices consistent with the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans in all major national policies and programs including USDA's food guidance system, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) food packages, school meals, Older Americans Act (OAA) nutrition programs, government health targets, and National Institutes of Health programs and communication efforts including clinical treatment guidelines.
- Assure that all relevant federal data collection efforts include adequate surveillance regarding consumer fruit and vegetable consumption, perceived availability, and knowledge of dietary recommendations (i.e., Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Youth Risk Behavior System, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey and National Health Interview Survey).

Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs

Federal food and nutrition assistance programs reach one in five Americans each day, providing an enormous opportunity to reach millions of vulnerable adults and children with healthy foods and healthy eating messages. Programs include the Food Stamp Program, National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, WIC, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and OAA nutrition programs. Given the increased emphasis on fruits and vegetables in the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, federal food and nutrition assistance programs should be reviewed and modified to assure that program regulations, guidance and funding include strong provisions to prioritize fruit and vegetable utilization and promotion.

- **Nutrition education:** Ensure that nutrition education, with a focus on the many health benefits of and practical tips for selecting, preparing and consuming a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, is a mandatory and funded component of all federal nutrition assistance programs.
- **Food Stamps:** Encourage greater emphasis on and promotion of increased consumption of fruits and vegetables. Pilot projects should be conducted to assess the dietary impact of bonus food stamps or increases in stamp benefits to purchase fruits and vegetables. Food stamp nutrition education guidance should also emphasize the promotion of fruits and vegetables in state education efforts.
- **WIC:** Update WIC food packages to provide greater access to fruits and vegetables, and assure that nutrition education guidance is provided to WIC operators to promote fruits and vegetables.
- **School lunch/breakfast programs:** Establish policies for school meals that provide incentives to schools that promote a greater variety and quantity of fruits and vegetables.
- **School wellness policies:** Ensure that school district wellness policies (required by 2004 Child Nutrition Program reauthorization to be in place by June 2006) include provisions to promote fruits and vegetables throughout the school day and across the school campus. Wellness policies can include expansion of fruit and vegetable offerings at school meals, farm to school programs, pricing incentives, fruit and vegetable vending, healthful competitive foods, fundraising, rewards and other school-based approaches to increase fruit and vegetable consumption.



- **Technical training:** Adequately fund efforts to train food and nutrition professionals to develop skills necessary to promote and market fruits and vegetables in program operations (school meal operators, Food and Nutrition Extension and OAA nutrition program personnel).
- **Team Nutrition:** Ensure that Team Nutrition-funded states include initiatives to promote fruits and vegetables to students and provide incentives to help schools meet the USDA Healthier Schools Initiative.
- **USDA Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program:** Expand this new federal program, which provides free fruit and vegetable snacks throughout the day to schools in all 50 states.
- **Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program:** Expand funding to allow more schools to participate in this program that provides high quality fresh fruits and vegetables to schools.
- **Farmers' Markets:** Expand the USDA Food and Nutrition Service WIC and senior farmers' market nutrition programs to provide access to fruits and vegetables to a greater number of program participants in all 50 states.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Ensure that CDC's current funding to states to promote nutrition and physical activity includes a strong fruit and vegetable component.
- Increase funding to all states to build infrastructure and strengthen programs to support increased fruit and vegetable consumption, including leadership training at state and local levels.
- Support funding at the national level for continued and strengthened efforts of the National 5 A Day Partnership, a partnership consisting of government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and industry working in collaboration to expand efforts to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables for improved public health.
- Build capacity at CDC to better support and enhance state 5 A Day activities.
- Build the evidence base to identify strategies to increase fruit and vegetable consumption in a variety of settings.
- Support dissemination of a behaviorally-focused communication strategy and tool kit that can be used consistently by all federal, state, nonprofit, business and community organizations in their efforts to encourage consumption of fruits and vegetables. A clear, actionable and consistent core message/call to action that people view as achievable should be used, and should be supported by articulating benefits of eating fruits and vegetables that are most important to consumers.

Food and Drug Administration

- Encourage nutrition labeling for restaurant chains with more than 50 units to provide nutrition information on key nutrients and/or numbers of fruit and vegetable servings at point of purchase to enable consumers to make informed choices.
- Develop a comprehensive approach to labeling that provides consumers with the most positive labeling information available about fruits and vegetables to help them make informed decisions in the marketplace (nutrient density, calorie labeling, servings/quantities of fruits and vegetables per package).

Conclusion

Poor eating habits lead to higher health care costs and lower quality of life for millions of Americans. Aggressive action to close the nation's fruit and vegetable consumption gap can improve those poor habits—but will require intensified efforts from an array of stakeholders. Grocery chains, worksites, restaurants, growers and processors, schools, and the federal government all play an important role in enhancing efforts to get Americans to eat a more healthy diet—rich in a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables.

This National Action Plan identifies many strategies to help Americans of all ages eat and drink more fruits and vegetables by increasing the accessibility and desirability of fruits and vegetables, providing practical tips for increasing consumption, and getting Americans in the habit of including fruits and vegetables at every eating occasion. From effective nutrition education and promotion efforts that give consumers the skills and motivation they need to make better choices, to producing and retailing more tasty, convenience-oriented and portable fruits and vegetables, to offering more fruits and vegetables in restaurants, fast food establishments, schools and worksites, to better aligning federal policy with dietary guidelines, this plan provides short and long range initiatives that together will create an environment where the healthy choice is the easy choice, and fruits and vegetables are center stage in producing a healthier America.

Website

This document as well as other resources and tools for implementing some of the strategies in this plan can be found at www.pbhfoundation.org/actionplan.

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