

# Obesity Facts: Fruit and Vegetable Intake in Alaska

## WHAT'S THE LINK BETWEEN OBESITY AND FRUITS AND VEGETABLES?

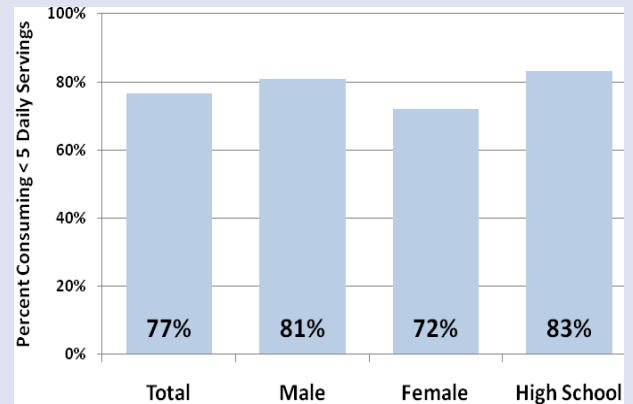
- Consumption of fruits and vegetables in place of high calorie foods may reduce the risk for obesity and help sustain weight loss.<sup>1</sup>
- Fruits and vegetables are low in energy density (calories) and fat.<sup>2</sup>
- Replacing foods of high energy density (high calories per weight of food) with foods of lower energy density can provide fewer calories for the same amount of food. For the same number of calories, people can eat more foods with low energy density than foods with high energy density.<sup>2</sup>
- The body's sense of fullness at meals is partly regulated by volume. Fruits and vegetables contain water and fiber that increase volume and the feeling of fullness while adding relatively few calories.<sup>2</sup>

**The DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS** recommends 2 ½ to 6 ½ cups of fruits and vegetables a day, or the equivalent of 5 to 13 servings depending on age, sex and activity level.<sup>3</sup>

To calculate daily servings see:  
<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov>

## FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION

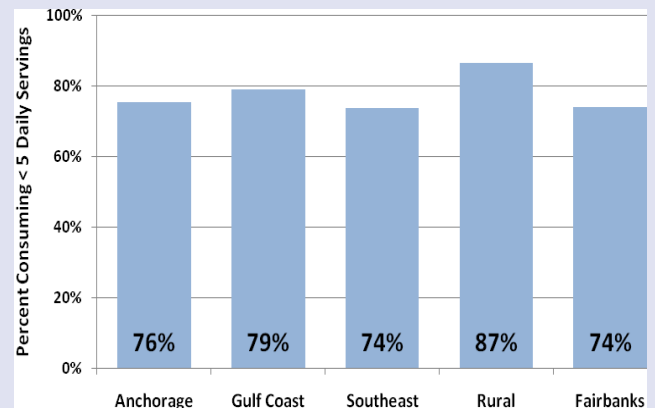
*PREVALENCE OF CONSUMING LESS THAN 5 DAILY SERVINGS OF FRUITS & VEGETABLES, BY SEX, ALASKA ADULTS/YOUTH*



Source: Alaska BRFSS 2009 and Alaska YRBS 2009

- In Alaska, 3 of every 4 adults eat less than the recommended 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day; men are more likely than women to fail to meet this goal.
- 83% of Alaska high school students eat less than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

*PREVALENCE OF CONSUMING LESS THAN 5 DAILY SERVINGS OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES, BY REGION, ALASKA ADULTS*



Source: Alaska BRFSS 2009

- Rural Alaskans are significantly more likely to eat less than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily than residents in Anchorage, Southeast and Fairbanks.

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## STRATEGIES TO INCREASE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION

### *What Can Alaskan Schools, Worksites & Communities Do?*<sup>4, 5</sup>

- Participate in food policy councils as a means to improve the food environment at state and local levels.
- Improve access to retail venues that sell or improve availability of fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruits and vegetables in currently underserved communities.
- Include or expand farm-to-where-you-are programs in all possible venues.
- Ensure ready access to fruits and vegetables in worksite foodservice and in food offered at meetings and events.
- Support and promote community and home gardens.
- Establish policies to incorporate fruit and vegetables into schools.
- Include fruits and vegetables in emergency food programs providing hunger relief.

### **ACCESS, AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY**

Increasing fruit and vegetable access, availability, and reducing price are key strategies to improved fruit and vegetable consumption.<sup>4</sup> Alaskans largest barriers to eating more fruits and vegetables are: cost (55%), lack of availability (35%), and inconvenience in eating or preparing fruits and vegetables (27%). (Source: Alaska BRFSS 2009)

### *What Can Health Care Providers Do?*

- Conduct dietary assessments that include fruit and vegetable intake on all children 2 to 18 years of age; encourage diets with recommended quantities of fruits and vegetables.<sup>6</sup>
- Encourage patients to lose weight by increasing intake of fruits and vegetables, as well as reducing overall intake of calories and fat.<sup>2</sup>

### *What Can Individuals Do?*<sup>2</sup>

- Increase your intake of fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruits and vegetables.
- Choose fruits and vegetables without added sugar, syrup, cream sauces, or other ingredients that will add calories.
- Substitute whole fruit for fruit juices, as whole fruit is lower in calories and higher in fiber than fruit juice.

### References

1. U.S. DHHS. *The Surgeon General's Vision for a Healthy and Fit Nation*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, January 2010.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Research to Practice Series, No. 1. Can eating fruits and vegetables help people to manage their weight?* September 2007. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity.
3. US Department of Health and Human Services and US Department of Agriculture. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005*. 6th ed, Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office; January 2005.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *The CDC Guide to Fruit and Vegetables Strategies to Increase Access, Availability and Consumption*. March 2010.
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *State Indicator Report on Fruits and Vegetables, 2009, National Action Guide*. 2009. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity.
6. Barlow SE, the Expert Committee. Expert committee recommendations regarding the prevention, assessment, and treatment of child and adolescent overweight and obesity: summary report. *Pediatrics*.2007;120(suppl):S164-S192.



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<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/obesity>

