

# Alaska Health Status Indicators

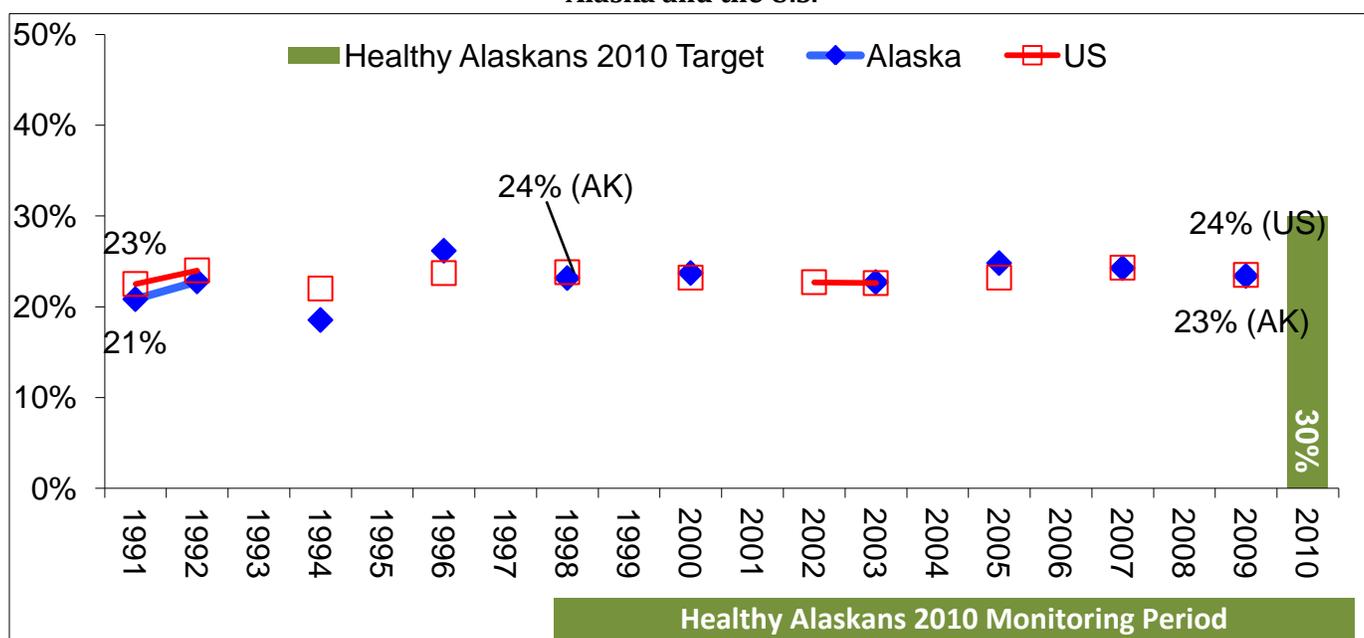
## Indicator: *Adult Fruit and Vegetable Consumption*

### Why is this important?

Fruits and vegetables are important to a healthful diet because they are low in calories, saturated fat, cholesterol, added sugars, and sodium (salt); and high in vitamins, minerals, and fiber.<sup>1</sup> Consuming a diet high in fruits and vegetables is associated with lower risks for numerous chronic diseases, including cancer and cardiovascular disease.<sup>1</sup> Fruits and vegetables are also promoted for the prevention of obesity because of their high water and fiber content, low fat content and low energy density, all effectively reducing energy (caloric) intake.<sup>2</sup>

### How are we doing?

**Percentage of Adults Who Meet Recommendations for Fruit and Vegetable Consumption:  
Alaska and the U.S.**



The percentage of Alaska adults who meet the recommendations for fruit and vegetable consumption (that is, consume 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day<sup>1</sup>) has fluctuated between 19% and 26% between 1991 and 2009, the latest year for which data are available.

#### ❖ How is Alaska Doing Relative to the *Healthy Alaskans 2010 Target*?

The *Healthy Alaskans 2010* target for fruit and vegetable consumption is 30% or higher. The prevalence of this indicator has remained relatively stable at around 24% during the *Healthy Alaskans 2010* monitoring period. **The *Healthy Alaskans 2010* target of 30% has not been met.**

#### ❖ How does AK compare with the US?

The prevalence of meeting fruit and vegetable consumption recommendations among adults in Alaska has paralleled that seen in the US.

#### ❖ How are different populations affected?

Women are more likely to meet the fruit and vegetable consumption recommendation (28%) than are men (19%). Alaska Natives (14%) and residents of rural Alaska (13%) have a lower prevalence of meeting this recommendation

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in comparison with their peers (25% for non-Natives; range of 21% to 26% for other regions of the state). Fruit and vegetable consumption increases with education level, with only 10% of those with less than a high school education meeting the recommendation, but 28% of college graduates meeting it. (Source: 2009 BRFSS)

### What is the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services doing to improve this indicator?

In collaboration with partners statewide, the Obesity Prevention and Control Program (OPCP) established a food policy council as a means to improve the food environment using evidence-based strategies<sup>3</sup> to increase fruit and vegetable access, availability and consumption of fruits and vegetables. The OPCS is managing a pilot project to increase access of fruits and vegetables to low income individuals. This pilot project enables Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program recipients to use their electronic transfer benefit card, called the QUEST card in Alaska, to purchase fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets. Evaluation of this pilot will help determine if the program should be expanded statewide. The program also provides important surveillance data and publishes reports on the behaviors and risk factors that contribute to obesity, including fruit and vegetable consumption, to help community coalitions and partners identify and track health problems, and evaluate the effectiveness of obesity prevention efforts. Additional information on current efforts to prevent obesity in Alaska is available at: <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/obesity/>.

### Indicator Definition and Notes

Percentage of adults aged 18 years and older who report consuming a total of at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily. This index is derived from the responses (in servings per day, week, month or year) to the following questions: (1) *How often do you drink fruit juices such as orange, grapefruit, or tomato?* (2) *Not counting juice, how often do you eat fruit?* (3) *How often do you eat green salad?* (4) *How often do you eat potatoes not including French fries, fried potatoes, or potato chips?* (5) *How often do you eat carrots?* (6) *Not counting carrots, potatoes, or salad, how many servings of vegetables do you usually eat?*

### Data Sources

Alaska: Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services; US: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Alaska data were obtained from the Standard AK BRFSS in 1991, even years between 1992 and 2003, and in 2003; Alaska data were obtained from the Standard and Supplemental AK BRFSS surveys combined in 2005, 2007 and 2009. The Supplemental BRFSS survey is conducted using identical methodology as the Standard BRFSS and allows a doubling of the BRFSS sample size for those measures included on both surveys.

### References

1. U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010*. 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, December 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. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *The CDC Guide to Fruit and Vegetables Strategies to Increase Access, Availability and Consumption*. March 2010.



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

