

Facts on Men and their Fruit and Vegetable Consumption: Seeing is Believing

Most Men Fall Short of the Goal

Despite the fact that fruits and vegetables are a critical factor for disease prevention and overall good health, they are often not even on men's radar screens. In fact, research shows the concept of eating more fruits and vegetables is not something most men even think about. Most men have no idea they should be eating 9 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

- 97% of men think their recommended fruit and vegetable intake is less than 9 servings per day.
- Only 25% of men believe they don't eat enough fruits and vegetables for good health and that they should be eating more.
- Men, on average, eat only 4 servings of fruits and vegetables a day—less than half of the amount recommended by the National Cancer Institute.

For Men, Seeing Is Believing

Men are shocked when they *hear* the recommendation to eat 9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day. They think 9 sounds like a lot more than it is and report, “I would have to eat every hour to get 9 A Day.”

But, when NCI conducted focus groups with small groups of men and showed them what 9 A Day looks like with real food, they commented, “That’s easy!” and “I can do that.” None of the men in focus groups were confident they could eat 9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day until they *were shown* what 9 A Day looks like. These preliminary findings suggest that men may need to see what 9 A Day looks like in order to have the confidence to achieve it.

- Before hearing the 9 A Day message, 75% of men think they either are, or are close to, eating enough fruits and vegetables.
- At first, the recommendation of 9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day shocks men.
- Hearing the number “9” alerts men that they’re not eating enough fruits and vegetables.
- After *hearing* the 9 A Day message, but not *seeing* 9 servings, only 9 percent of men think they can eat this amount.
- After *seeing* what 9 A Day looks like, most men think this amount is “doable.”
- Men are motivated to achieve 9 when they see how small serving sizes really are, and that it is easy to get 2 to 3 servings in what they often consider a “regular portion.”

(more)

Men Recognize Health Benefits of Fruits and Vegetables

NCI's research indicates most men already recognize fruits and vegetables are important for good health. The problem is men often believe fruits and vegetables are important only because they replace unhealthy foods—not because they provide a wealth of important nutrients like vitamins, minerals, fiber, and hundreds of disease-fighting phytochemicals. Men don't realize that fruits and vegetables are protective against disease, but rather they think these foods “replace” other foods that cause disease.

- When asked, men report they believe eating fruits and vegetables would help them: feel and look better, maintain or lose weight, stay “regular,” and have a long life.
- Over 50% of men make food choices to help control their weight; but, eating more fruits and vegetables instead of other high-calorie foods is often not part of their weight control strategy.

Barriers and Why Men Don't Eat More

Most men don't perceive any significant barriers to eating more fruits and vegetables. In fact, survey data shows the traditionally assumed barriers—like cost, taste, convenience, or preference for other foods—affect at the very most only 15% of men. Of these barriers, most could be overcome if men were more knowledgeable about ways to incorporate fruits and vegetables into their diets throughout the day.

- A key difference between men who eat a lot of fruits and vegetables and those who don't is awareness of the recommendation to eat more fruits and vegetables, as well as awareness they're not eating enough.
- Only 15% of men say their preference for other foods affects their fruit and vegetable intake.
- Only 13% of men say fruits and vegetables aren't easily accessible.
- Only 14% of men say fruits and vegetables are difficult to eat on the go.
- Only 5% of men say they don't like the taste of fruits and vegetables.

Helping Men Score 9; Men Say:

- Start the day with a serving of fruit – try fruit on your cereal or a fresh piece of fruit to go.
- Eat more fruit as snacks throughout the day – try taking oranges, peaches, or apples with you for the day instead of other snacks.
- Eat big salads at lunch – try baby spinach topped with cucumbers, carrots, apple slices, and low-fat dressing.
- Eat larger servings of vegetables at dinner – try two different vegetables.

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