



Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption is an important healthy behavior that can help prevent heart disease, some cancers, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and the risk of overweight and obesity.¹ In 2004, the Cancer Prevention and Nutrition Section (CPNS) sponsored questions in the California Women's Health Survey (CWHS) to determine women's belief and practice of the prevailing fruit and vegetable dietary recommendations to eat five or more servings per day. In 2005, the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Agriculture released revised Dietary Guidelines for Americans that almost doubled the daily fruit and vegetable recommendations for women.²

Overall 61.0 percent of the 4,434 women aged 18 to 97 believe they should eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day for good health ("5 a Day"). (A serving was defined for respondents as being about 1/2 cup of vegetables or fruit, 6 ounces of 100.0 percent fruit or vegetable juice, a medium piece of fruit, or 1 cup of green salad.) However, only 20.7 percent reported that they usually ate five or more servings of fruit/vegetables in an average day. "5 a Day" belief and practice varied significantly by race/ethnicity, income and education level,³ and age group.⁴

- White women were most likely to report they should eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day (69.9 percent), followed by Black/African American (55.4 percent), Asian/Other (51.8 percent), and Hispanic women (49.9 percent). Similarly, more White women (26.0 percent) reported eating five or more servings on the average day than Asian/Other (17.4 percent), Hispanic (14.3 percent), and Black/African American women (11.6 percent).
- In general, "5 a Day" belief was greater among younger women, with 64.5 percent of respondents 25-34 years of age reporting they should eat five or more servings for good health compared with 56.2 percent of women 65 years of age and older. However, behavior was more positive in the older age group, with one in four women aged 65 and older reporting they ate five or more servings compared with fewer than one in five of women aged 25-34.
- Fewer than half (44.9 percent) of the women with incomes below the federal poverty level thought they should eat five or more servings of fruit and vegetable per day for good health, compared with two-thirds (69.4 percent) of respondents with incomes more than twice the federal poverty level. Only one in ten respondents below the federal poverty level reported eating five or more servings compared with one in four of the respondents whose income was more than twice the federal poverty level (see graph).
- Greater formal education was associated with "5 a Day" belief and practice: 42.6 percent and 13.3 percent, respectively, for women with less than high school education; 52.2 percent and 14.1 percent for those completing high school; 66.9 percent and 21.5 percent for women with some college; and 70.6 percent and 27.8 percent for college graduates.

Eating Five or More Fruits and Vegetable Servings a Day: Belief versus Practice of California Women, 2004

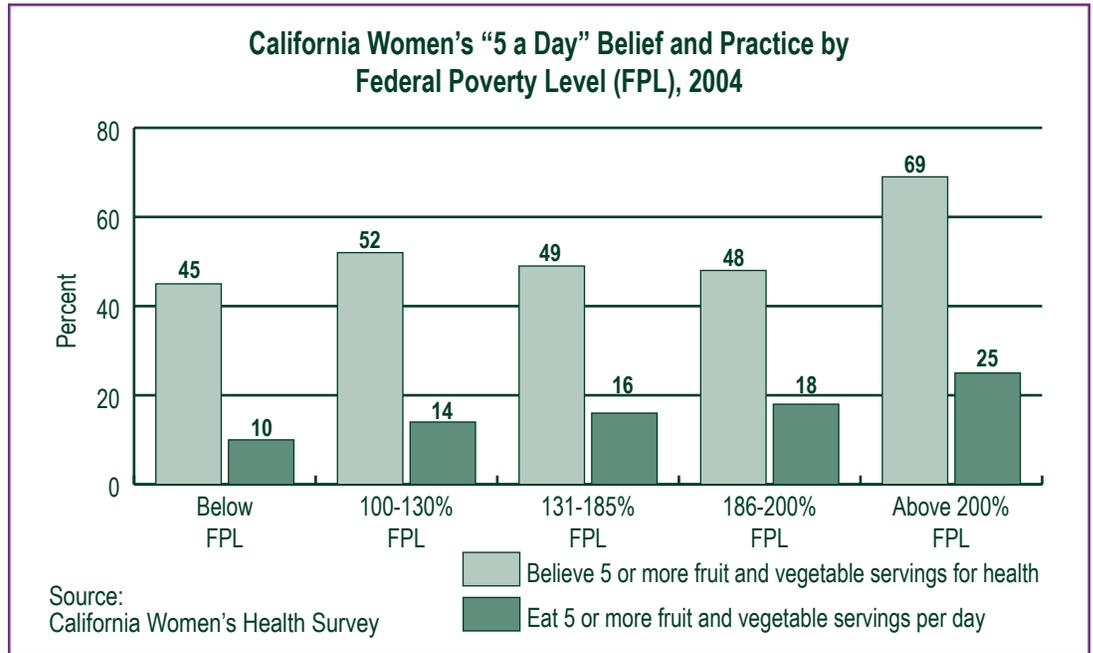
California Department of Health Services
Cancer Prevention and Nutrition Section

Public Health Message: *Most California women believe they should eat five or more fruit and vegetable servings each day for good health but only one in five do so. Eating the recommended servings was positively related to respondent's age, income, and education level. Black/African American women were least likely to eat five or more fruit and vegetable servings daily. The new 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans further widen the gap between women's belief and their fruit and vegetable consumption. These data are consistent with other California surveys showing the need for additional policy, programmatic, and environmental efforts to improve fruit and vegetable access, availability, opportunity, and incentive for consumption.*

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- 1 Hyson, D. The health benefits of fruits and vegetables: A scientific overview for health professionals. Produce for Better Health Foundation, 2002.
- 2 United States Department of Agriculture, United States Department of Health and Human Services. 2005. Dietary guidelines for Americans 2005. Available at: www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines.
- 3 $p < 0.0001$, chi-square test.
- 4 $p = .02$, chi-square test.

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