



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

www.adph.org

"Eating 5 to 9 and feeling fine" is the theme for National 5 A Day Week

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Heidi Hataway

(334) 206-5651

hhataway@adph.state.al.us

The good news is that American adults are eating more fruits and vegetables, nearing the minimum of "5 A Day" for better health. Still, many Americans should strive to eat up to 9 daily servings. "Eating 5 to 9 and Feeling Fine," the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) theme for 5 A Day Week, Sept. 22 through 28, will raise awareness of the need to eat more than just 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

The 5 A Day slogan, representing the message to eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day for better health, is one of the most widely recognized nutrition messages in the world. "But, it's time to let Americans know that the recommendation is really '5 to 9' servings," explained Heidi Hataway, assistant director of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Unit of the Alabama Department of Public Health. "According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, released jointly by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2000, children ages 2 to 6 should eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day for good health; children over age 6, active women, and teens should eat 7; and active teen boys and men should eat 9."

The recommendation to eat 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day dates back to 1991 when the USDA first published the Food Guide Pyramid. The pyramid recommends eating 2 to 4 servings of fruits and 3 to 5 servings of vegetables every day for a total of 5 to 9 daily servings. In 1999, USDA published an additional pyramid for young children specifying that children ages 2 to 6 should eat 3 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruit for a total of 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

Scientific findings continue to support the importance of eating more colorful fruits and vegetables because they may reduce the risk for heart disease, hypertension, certain types of cancer, diabetes and other diseases. Although eating more fruits and vegetables, a relatively simple lifestyle change, could have a profound impact on the nation's health, approximately 70 percent of American adults and children are still not eating enough.

"Colorful fruits and vegetables—green, yellow/orange, red, blue/purple, and white—provide essential vitamins, minerals, fiber, and several hundred unique disease-fighting phytochemicals that work together," said Hataway. "Only fruits and vegetables, not pills or supplements, can provide all of these health benefits."

Even people who are trying to lose weight could benefit from eating more fruits and vegetables because they are naturally low in calories and high in fiber and water. Eating fruits and vegetables and engaging in frequent physical activity are two important lifestyle behaviors for weight control. More than 60 percent of adults in the U.S. are overweight or obese.

"We are not recommending that overweight Americans eat more food, but if they want to control or maintain their weight, they could replace higher-calorie foods with fruits and vegetables," said Hataway. "The high water and fiber content of fruits and vegetables will help keep them well-satisfied on fewer calories."

Groups who tend not to eat enough fruits and vegetables include school-age children and teenagers, men ages 20 to 59 years, African Americans, and lower income and lower educated populations. Because African Americans have the lowest awareness (less than 14 percent) of the importance of eating fruits and vegetables, have the lowest intake of fruits and vegetables, and have the highest rates of many diet-related diseases, NCI is spearheading a national campaign to reach African American men ages 35 to 50 years with the "eat 5 to 9" message.

This year during 5 A Day Week, the public health department urges Americans to make small changes in their daily diet to make room for 5 to 9 daily servings of colorful fruits and vegetables. These small changes may mean big rewards—like looking good, having more energy, and avoiding common ailments.

Most people do not realize how easy it is to get their 5 to 9 daily servings of fruits and veggies. Servings are much smaller than people think. One serving is only a cup of cooked vegetables or fruit, a cup of dried fruit, a cup of 100 percent juice, or one cup of salad or leafy greens. A large salad, for instance, can add up to 2 to 3 servings of vegetables.

Fresh, frozen, dried, canned, and juiced fruits and vegetables all count toward the "5 to 9" goal. A glass of 100 percent juice with breakfast, a banana for a mid-morning snack, a salad at lunch, some carrot sticks or an apple in the afternoon, and pasta with cooked veggies and tomato sauce at dinner is just one example of how easy it is to get up to 9 servings a day.

For additional tips and recipes, check out the 5 A Day Web site at www.5aday.gov, or visit the Alabama Department of Public Health's Web site at www.adph.org

09/11/02