

Fruits & Vegetables

Findings from the Texas Child Feeding Study¹

Background

In 2006 (when the survey was conducted), the USDA recommended that children eat 5-9 servings of a variety of fruits and vegetables each day.

The current recommendations are based on cups per day that vary by age and individual calorie needs. For specific information, visit www.mypyramid.gov.

What did we ask?

- How many servings of fruit does your child eat daily?*
- How many servings of vegetables does your child eat daily?*
- How many times in the past week did your child eat?*

What did we learn?

In this sample, how many servings of fruits and vegetables (F/V) do parents report that their children eat? See Figure 1.

- On average, parents reported that their children eat 2.1 servings of fruit and 2.4 servings of vegetables each day.
 - We found no differences among WIC, low-income non-WIC and higher-income respondents.
- Almost half of the parents reported that their children eat 5 or more servings of F/V daily, even though only 14% of parents identified that their children should eat at least 5 servings of F/V daily.

What was associated with higher F/V intake?

- Children's eating patterns:
 - Fruit and vegetable snacks
 - Less fast food
 - More frequent home cooked main meals
- Parents' perceptions and beliefs:
 - Higher self-efficacy (confidence) for feeding child fruits and vegetables
 - Confidence that they can afford to buy vegetables
 - Perception that the child is not a picky eater
 - Nutritional content is important when choosing what to feed their children
 - Knowledge about how many servings of fruits and vegetables a child should eat.

Continues on back.

Figure 1.
AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAILY FRUIT & VEGETABLE SERVINGS*
CONSUMED BY TEXAS CHILDREN, AGES 1-5
n=688

Fruit and Vegetable Servings Combined	WIC n=231	Low Income Non-WIC n=259	Higher Income Non-WIC n=198
0-2	13%	11%	16%
3-4	41%	41%	40%
5 or more	47%	48%	45%

*Based on parents' report.

¹ Results from the Texas Child Feeding Study, conducted by the University of Texas at Austin Nutrition Education Team, in conjunction with the Texas Dept. of State Health Service. Seven hundred and twenty-one (721) Texas households were surveyed. Households had at least one child between the ages of 1 and 5 years and were grouped into the following categories: WIC households (n=241); low-income, non-WIC households (n=274); middle to high-income households (n=203). For more information on the study, contact Shellie Shores at: shellie.shores@dshs.state.tx.us.





What did we learn? (continued)

Demographics:

- Food security was not associated with F/V intake.
- Child's age was not associated with F/V intake.
- Parents' ethnicity was not associated with F/V intake.
 - Among Hispanics parents, children of English speakers tended to eat more F/V than children of Spanish speakers.

Among WIC children in the sample:

- What were the most frequently eaten fruits and vegetables in the previous week? See Figure 2.
 - Parents reported that their children ate more potatoes than any other fruit or vegetable in the previous week. This includes both baked or boiled potatoes (average weekly intake = 1.7 times) and French fries (average weekly intake = 1.9 times).
 - Note that the survey was conducted in Texas from mid-September to mid-October. This may influence availability of certain seasonal fruits and vegetables.

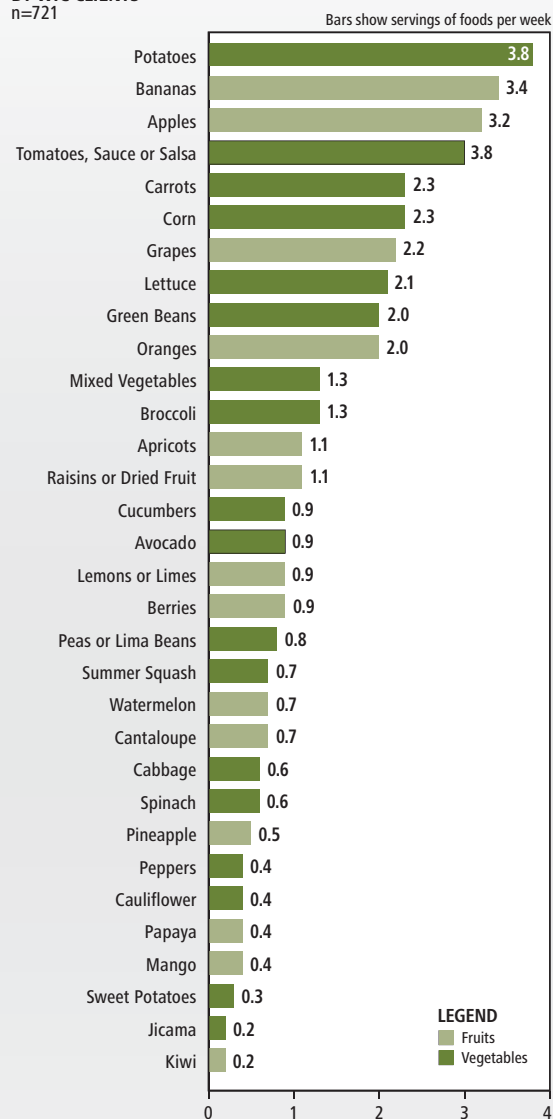
Implications for WIC Nutrition Educators

- The new food package will help increase access to fruits and vegetables.
- Encourage parents to incorporate fruits and vegetables into every meal they prepare at home. Provide recipes that include fruits and vegetables to help parents add more variety to their children's diets.
- Encourage parents to offer their children fruits and vegetables as snacks.
- Offer food demonstrations and hands-on cooking classes to build parents' confidence for cooking with fruits and vegetables.
- Provide educational materials aimed at kids, such as the Zowzoo and Zobey videos, to help increase children's desire to eat fruits and vegetables.

Figure 2.

FREQUENCY OF FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION BY WIC CLIENTS

n=721



For more information about this study series, please visit:

www.dshs.state.tx.us/wichd/nut/riskreport-nut.shtm

