| **Fruit and Vegetable Consumption Rate**  
| (Indicator Set: Policy) |
|---|---|
| **Descriptive Definition** | Percentage of population, age 12 and older, who reported consuming fruits and vegetables five or more times daily. |
| **Method of Calculation** | **Numerator** Number of individuals in the denominator who reported consuming fruits and vegetables five or more times daily.  
**Inclusions**  
• Individual is in the denominator  
• Individual reported consuming fruits and vegetables five or more times daily  
**Exclusions** None |
| **Denominator** | Number of respondents age 12 and older.  
**Inclusions**  
• Age of individual is at least 12 years  
**Exclusions** None |
| **Data Source** | Canadian Community Health Survey¹ |
| **Notes** | • This measure classifies individuals based on the total number of times they ate fruits and vegetables per day (frequency), not the quantity of fruits and vegetables they consumed per day.² |
| **Interpretation** | • A high rate for this indicator can be interpreted as a positive result. |
| **Indicator Rationale** | *Eating Well With Canada’s Food Guide 2011* recommends that people age 4 and older should eat 5 to 10 servings of fruits and vegetables per day.³ Research indicates that consuming a diet rich in fruits and vegetables may help prevent cardiovascular disease⁴ and certain types of cancer⁵ and is associated with healthy weights and decreased risk of obesity.⁶ In addition, consuming a diet low in fruits and vegetables has been associated with other health risk behaviours, including physical inactivity, smoking and alcohol dependence.⁷  
In a recent survey, more than half of Canadians age 12 and older were found to be falling short of the recommended five-serving minimum of fruit and vegetable consumption per day. Forty-three percent of Canadians older than age 12 reported consuming five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day, with females consuming five or more servings more frequently than males (approximately 50% and 36%, respectively).⁸ |
In 2004, the Canadian Community Health Survey—Nutrition collected data specific to nutrition in the first national survey of Canadians' eating habits since the early 1970s. The survey found that 7 out of 10 children age 4 to 8 consumed fewer than five servings of fruits and vegetables a day; at ages 9 to 13, 62% of girls and 68% of boys did not meet the minimum recommended guidelines.9

Inadequate consumption of fruits and vegetables is an important public health concern and is influenced by many factors, including access, affordability, education and skills such as food preparation. Evidence suggests that this health indicator is a reasonable proxy for healthy eating habits.9 The primary health care provider is perfectly positioned to support his or her patients in developing healthy eating and other lifestyle habits that promote optimal health and prevent disease.

References


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