



## CLARK COUNTY ADULTS AND YOUTH RISK FACTOR OF NUTRITION April, 2007 Update

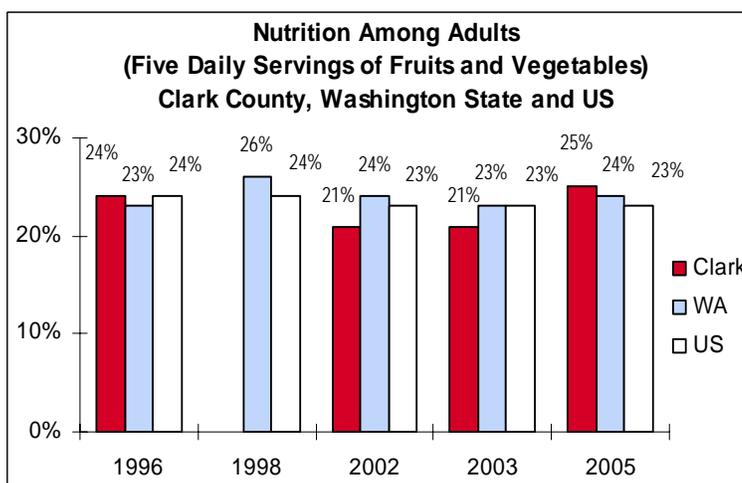
Poor nutrition is a risk factor for obesity and a number of chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease. Getting plenty of fruits and vegetables in the daily diet has been associated with reduced rates of obesity and can help ward off heart disease and stroke, aid in controlling blood pressure and cholesterol, reduce the risk of diabetes, and prevent some types of cancer. Few adults in our country consume an adequate amount of fruits and vegetables to realize these benefits.

Because of the tremendous benefits of fruits and vegetables in the diet, the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends eating more fruits and vegetables than any other food group. Individuals are encouraged to eat from five to thirteen servings a day, depending on a person's caloric needs which are determined by their age, sex and physical activity level. The average American gets a total of just three servings of fruits and vegetables a day.<sup>1</sup>

Calculating a serving can be difficult since fruits and vegetables are consumed either raw, cooked or as juices. Dietary recommendations now are based on standard measuring cups. Two cups of fruit and two and a half cups of vegetables are recommended per day for a 2,000 calorie intake, with higher or lower depending on calorie and activity levels.

In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice, or 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup from the vegetable group. And, 1 cup of fruit or 100% fruit juice, or ½ cup of dried fruit can be considered as 1 cup from the fruit group. Additionally, eating a variety of different colored fruits and vegetables is necessary to get the broadest range of nutrients. All colors of fruits and vegetables are important—red, green, yellow, blue, purple, white and orange.<sup>2,3</sup>

### Adult Fruit and Vegetable Consumption



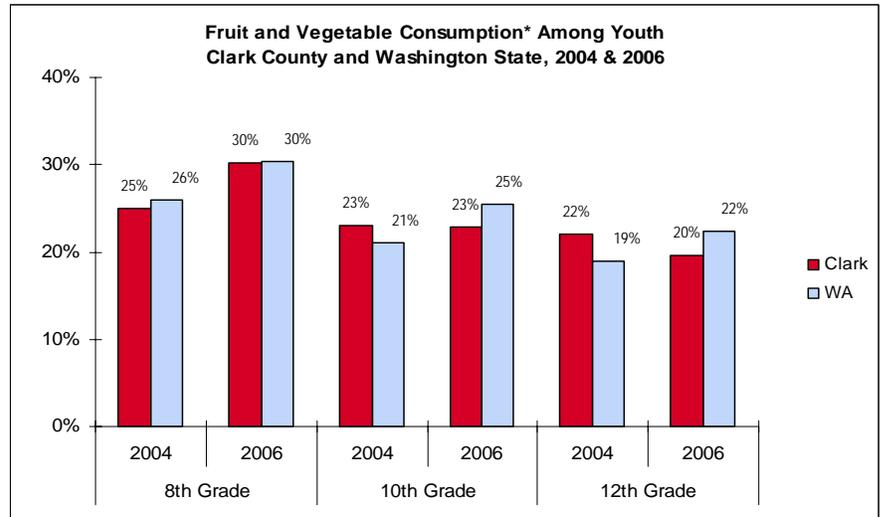
Source: Clark County, Washington State and United States, BRFSS.

While the new recommended measure for fruits and vegetables are cups, survey data is collected in servings. One out of four adults (25%) reported eating five daily servings of fruits and vegetables per day in Clark County in 2005. This is a slight increase over 2003 when one out of five (21%) adults reported eating at least five daily servings of fruits and vegetables. The Clark County rate is similar to both the Washington State rate and the national rate in 2005.<sup>4, 10</sup>



## Youth Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

There has been a small but significant increase in the fruit and vegetable consumption among eighth graders from 25% in 2004 to 30% in 2006. However, fruit and vegetable consumption declines as youth increase in age. Only one out of five (20%) twelfth graders reported eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables in 2006. Clark County youth fruit and vegetable consumption is similar to Washington State's.<sup>5</sup>

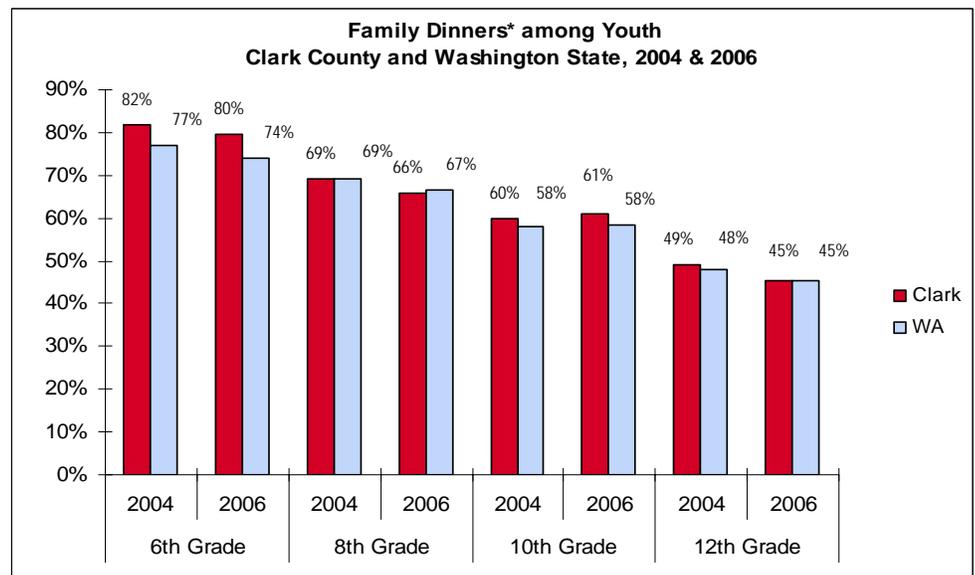


\* Percent of youth who ate 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day.  
Source: *Washington State Healthy Youth Surveys*

## Family Dinner Frequency

Frequent family dinners have been shown to increase adolescent health and well-being, reduce substance abuse, and improve dietary intake.<sup>6, 7, 8</sup> Family meals allow children the opportunity to learn communication skills, manners, good eating habits and nutrition. Studies suggest better dietary quality (increase in fruit and vegetable consumption) for children who have an increased frequency of family meals. Furthermore, increased family meal frequency may be associated with decreased risk of certain delinquent behaviors such as substance abuse, poor grades, depression, and suicidal thoughts or behavior.

The frequency of family dinners declines as youth increase in age. Four out of five sixth graders reported eating dinner with their families 'most of the time' or 'always' compared to fewer than half twelfth graders in Clark County and Washington State in both 2004 and 2006.<sup>5</sup>

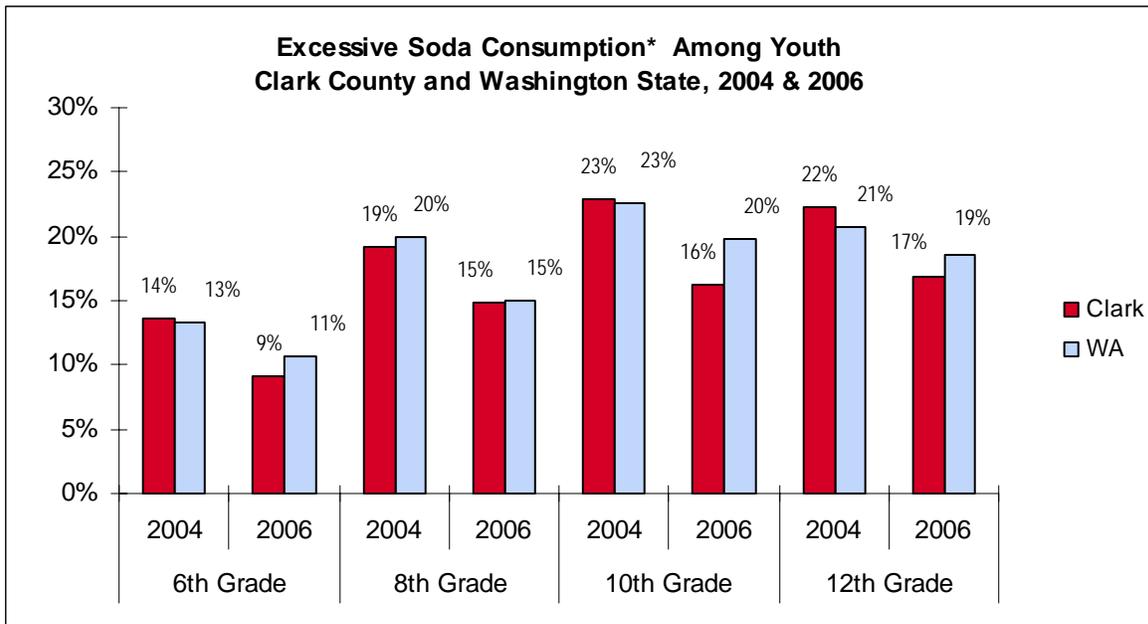


\* Percent of youth who reported eating dinner with family 'most of the time' or 'always'.  
Source: *Washington State Healthy Youth Surveys*



## Soda Consumption

Soda consumption leads to excess caloric intake and weight gain. Consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks has been associated with childhood obesity.<sup>9</sup> Excessive soda consumption is measured as reporting drinking more than two sodas. This does not include diet soda. From 2004 to 2006 there has been a decline in excessive soda consumption among middle and high school students in Clark County and statewide.<sup>5</sup>



\* Percent of students who report drinking 2 or more sodas yesterday. Does not include diet soda.  
Source: *Washington State Healthy Youth Surveys*



References:

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