

NUTRITION

Healthy eating patterns in childhood and adolescence are essential for optimal growth and intellectual development. Even short-term nutritional deficiencies of key nutrients like iron can influence children's behavior, ability to concentrate, and to perform complex tasks. This type of undernutrition has been shown to have lasting effects on cognitive development and school performance.¹¹ In addition, children who frequently skip or miss eating breakfast may be at higher risk for decreased problem-solving skills.³

Healthy childhood eating patterns help prevent childhood health problems, such as iron deficiency anemia, obesity, eating disorders, and dental caries, but also are important in preventing longer term health problems such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, and osteoporosis.³ (MMWR, 1996 (45:RR-9).

The first four questions provide some measure of nutritional intake and eating patterns among Oregon high school students. YRBS questions relating to nutrition have changed over time, and so past data are not comparable to the 1999 information. These changes reflect ongoing difficulties in identifying appropriate measures for the dietary intake of children and adolescents.¹² However, an increasing body of evidence indicates a diet rich in fruit and vegetables reduces the risk of cancer and other chronic diseases. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) recommends that people eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables per day, and is also advocating changes in society and the food industry to encourage the availability of good food. The new YRBS measure of food intake includes six questions which focus on the NCI Five-a-Day recommendations.¹³ However, Oregon 1999 YRBS does not include the full set of questions needed to calculate the Five-a-Day measure. Thus, the data from each question is presented here separately.

The next two questions focus on breakfast and meals eaten with family. Studies indicate that for young people, eating dinners more frequently with family is associated with higher intakes of dietary fiber, calcium, iron and several vitamins, as well as lower intake of the unhealthy saturated fat and trans fats. Those youth who had family dinners less often consumed more soft drinks and more fried food.¹⁴

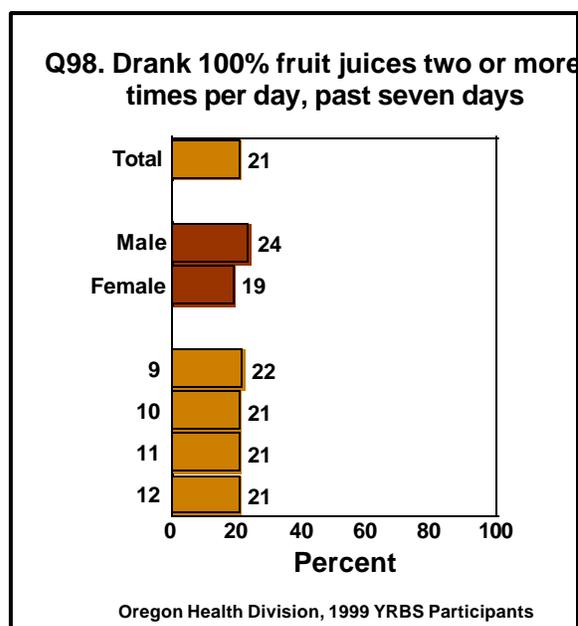
WHAT OREGON STUDENTS REPORTED

Q98. During the past 7 days, how many times did you drink 100% fruit juices such as orange juice, or grape juice? (Do not count punch, Kool-Aid, sports drinks, or other fruit-flavored drinks.)

A little over a fifth of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants (21 percent) reported that they drank 100% fruit juice two or more times per day during the week prior to the survey.

More males than females reported drinking 100% fruit juice twice daily (24 vs. 19 percent).

The proportion of students drinking fruit juice twice daily did not appear to differ by grade.

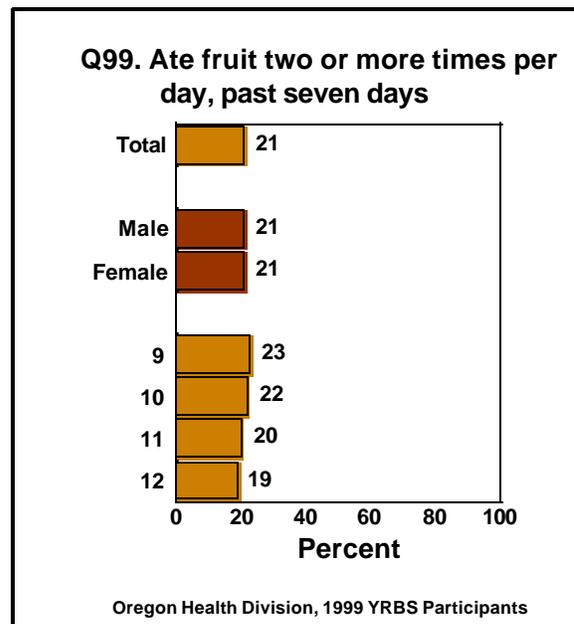


Q99. During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat fruit? (Do not count fruit juice)

As with fruit juice consumption, a little over a fifth of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants (21 percent) reported eating fruit twice daily in the week prior to the survey.

This proportion did not vary by gender.

Fruit consumption decreased as grade increased, dropping about 17 percent between 9th and 12th grades (23 vs. 19 percent).

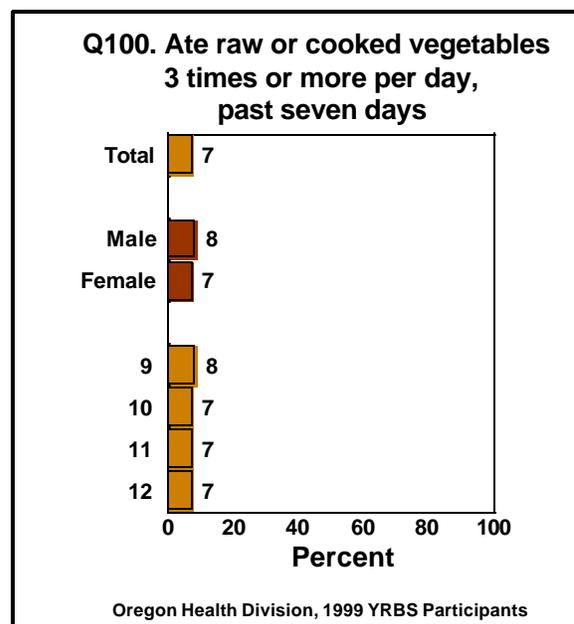


Q100. During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat raw or cooked vegetables (including green salad)?

Of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants, 7 percent ate raw or cooked vegetables (including green salad) three or more times per day in the week prior to the survey.

Slightly more males than females reported eating vegetables three or more times per day (8 vs. 7 percent).

The percentage of students eating vegetables also differed very little by grade, although 9th graders appeared to be slightly more likely than others to eat vegetables daily.

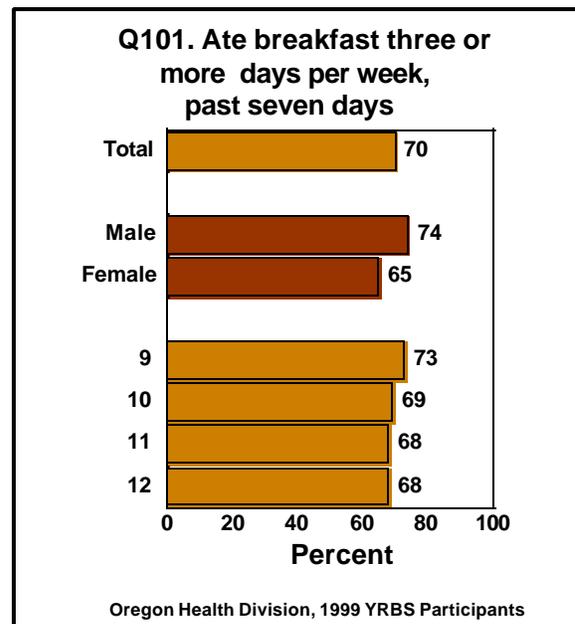


Q101. In the past 7 days, how many days did you eat breakfast?

Over two thirds of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants (70 percent) ate breakfast three or more days per week seven days prior to the survey.

Almost 12 percent more males than females ate breakfast three or more days per week (74 vs. 65 percent).

Ninth graders were 7 percent more likely to report having eaten breakfast three or more days per week than 11th or 12th graders (73 vs. 68 percent).

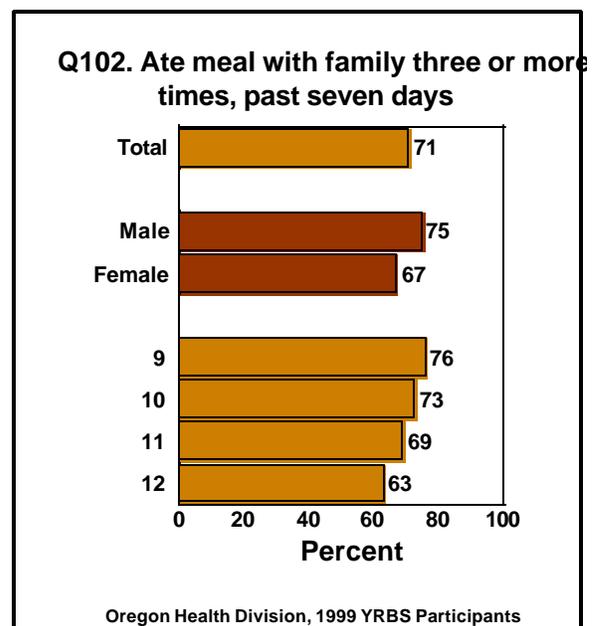


Q102. How many times during the past 7 days did you eat a meal with your family? (Of those students who were at home during the past week)

Over two thirds of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants reported that they ate three or more meals with their families seven days prior to the survey.

Males were 12 percent more likely than females to eat meals regularly with their families (75 vs. 67 percent).

The proportion of students who frequently ate meals with their families declined as grade increased. Ninth graders were 17 percent more likely to have eaten a meal with their families than were 12th graders (76 vs. 63 percent).

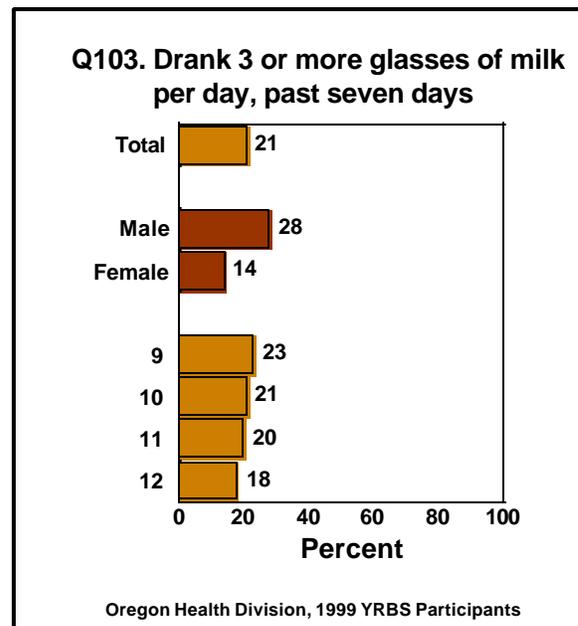


Q103. During the past 7 days, how many glasses of milk did you drink?

Calcium intake is instrumental in preventing osteoporosis and other chronic disease conditions, and formation of bone mass during childhood through young adulthood, but studies indicate that intake is lower than recommended for adolescents and women of all ages.¹⁵ Milk is the primary source of calcium intake among young people. Only one fifth of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants (21 percent) drank three or more glasses of milk per day in the week prior to the survey.

Twice as many males as females drank three or more glasses of milk per day (28 vs. 14 percent).

Among the grade levels, milk consumption fell somewhat as grade increased. Ninth graders were about 21 percent more likely than 12th graders to drink three or more glasses of milk daily.



WHAT OREGON STUDENTS WROTE

"I don't really have a healthy lifestyle but I'm not completely unhealthy either. I eat a lot of junk food. I should probably not eat at fast food restaurants so much and have a balanced diet."

"The only healthy lifestyle is not eating right. They say America is fat, but it's no wonder, because healthy food is twice as expensive as junk food. They should figure that out and lower the cost of eating healthy."

"I'm in good shape, I gained weight after Basic Training, but I exercise regularly and will be back in good shape as soon as I really focus on my diet and exercise. I'd like to learn more about how to plan a good healthy diet."

"I don't get enough sleep and I don't eat breakfast. I try my best to get to sleep after my sporting events but I have to get up early to go to class. So there is no time for breakfast."

"My mom helps me keep good eating habits, but sometimes I wish there were other sources of calcium other than milk."

"You could serve breakfast to our class rooms so everyone can eat. Some people have no food."