

Access to Nutritious Food Briefing Document
Presented to the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities
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Nutrition refers to the process of absorbing nutrients from the food we eat and processing them in the body in order to maintain health and grow. Two measures of **access to nutritious food** include intake of fruits and vegetables and food insecurity rates.

CRITERION #1: MAGNITUDE

- In 2005, 26% of Washington adults reported eating fruits and vegetables five or more times a day; this rate has remained relatively constant from 1994-2005.
- In 2003, 5% of Washington adults reported that they went hungry or did not eat because of not having enough money for food, 15% reported that they ran out of food before the end of the month, and 9% cut meal sizes or skipped meals in the past 12 months because there was not enough money for food.

CRITERION #2: ASSOCIATION TO HEALTH OUTCOMES

- Poor diet, along with low levels of physical activity, was the second leading cause of death in the United States, accounting for 400,000 deaths in the year 2000 (16.6%).
- Evidence suggests that consumption of fruits and vegetables within recommended levels might protect against obesity, prevent certain types of cancer, reduce the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, and hypertension, promote respiratory health, prevent diverticulosis, and prevent the formation of cataracts.
- Food insecurity can lead to malnutrition, elevated risk for chronic diseases, poor management of diabetes and other chronic diseases, psychosocial dysfunction, anxiety, depression, lower overall health status, and decreased quality of life. Food insecurity is associated with being overweight among women and in reduced consumption of fruits and vegetables.

CRITERION #3: DISPARITY

- In Washington, data from 2003 and 2005 found that Asians and Pacific Islanders were most likely to eat fruit and vegetables five or more times per day (30.3%), followed by American Indian/Alaska Natives (24.2%) whites (24.1%), blacks (21.0%), and Hispanics (20.6%) for an Index of Disparity of not meeting fruit and vegetable guidelines of 11%.*
- Washington data from 2003 and 2005 combined found that women were more likely to report eating fruits and vegetables at least five times a day, 29% relative to 19%, respectively.

The Index of Disparity is the average of the difference in rates between the racial/ethnic group with the "best" rate and all other racial/ethnic groups.

Keppel KG et al., Measuring progress in healthy people 2010. Statistical Notes, no 25. NCHS, 2004.

**Consistent with Keppel et al., (2004), fruit and vegetable consumption rates were transformed to rates for not meeting the fruit and vegetable consumption guidelines for purposes of calculating the Index of Disparity.*