

# Study: College students not eating enough fruits and veggies

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College students aren't eating enough fruits and vegetables – in fact, a new study shows students aren't even eating one serving per day, far from the recommended five daily servings.

The study by Oregon State University researchers surveyed the eating habits of 582 [college students](#), a majority of which were first-year [students](#). The study, now online in the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, compares male and female students, but found that both were not getting the proper amount of [fruits and vegetables](#). Male students had about five servings a week, slightly higher than female students who self-reported eating about four servings of fruits and vegetables.

Female students had lower fiber intake, while males tended to consume more fat in their diet. Overall, the females had better eating habits, including skipping fewer meals, eating in the college dining halls more frequently, and reading food labels.

"We found that students skipped meals fairly frequently, which could account for some of the lack of fruits and veggies," said Brad Cardinal, a professor of exercise and sport science at Oregon State University and one of the study's authors.

"Still, even accounting for fewer meals consumed, the students were on average not always eating even one serving of fruits or vegetables per day, far below the USDA guidelines."

Both males and females were consuming more than 30 percent of their calories from fat, which exceeds the American Dietetic Association's recommendation of no more than 30 percent a week.

Cardinal, who is an expert in the psychological and social aspects of health and exercise, said the larger take-away message is that proper eating and nutrition is not integrated enough into our society. He said the surveyed students came from OSU, where healthy options are available in dining halls.

"We are not teaching youth how to be self-sustaining," Cardinal said. "Home economics and nutrition classes have all but disappeared from our schools in the K-12 system. There is a fundamental lack of understanding on how to [eat](#) well in a very broad sense."

Cardinal said studies show that when people prepare food at home they tend to eat better and consume fewer calories. He said their survey showed that students ate out a lot and consumed at least one fast food meal per week.

"We have a cooking camp for (elementary school) kids here at OSU that teaches kids how to shop for their food, prepare it and then clean up after themselves," he said. "These are essential skills every child should know, and it will stay with them long after they leave school."

Cardinal pointed to recent concerning trends, such as in Texas where health education is no longer required by the state. In addition, many school districts, including ones in Oregon, have cut home economics/nutrition classes due to budget constraints.

"Health is an area being neglected, yet all the available research show that healthy habits and healthy kids can lead to better academic success," Cardinal said. "We are doing a disservice to our kids by not teaching

them these essential life skills."

Provided by Oregon State University

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