

Young Australians lack good quality fruit and vegetable knowledge

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Half of young Australians don't know the recommended daily amount of fruit and vegetables. Credit: Flickr/Jessica Mullen

A new survey of young Australians has found one in two don't know how many servings of fruit and vegetables to eat in a day, and even fewer know the serving sizes of common fruit and vegetables.

The survey of 106 university students aged 18 to 24 found only 54 percent knew the recommended daily amounts of fruit and [vegetables](#). Participants in the survey, conducted by University of Sydney researchers, also did not know the correct serving sizes for three of the four foods tested in the study (grapes, carrots and lettuce) - although

most could correctly identify the serving size of an apple.

Some participants estimated the serving size of grapes to be just one grape, and others estimated the serving size for carrots to be the equivalent of 20 carrots, when it is 20 grapes and half a medium-sized carrot (or half a cup of chopped carrot).

The survey has been published in the Dietitians Association of Australia's journal *Nutrition and Dietetics*. According to the University of Sydney researchers - [health psychology](#) expert Dr. Barbara Mullan and PhD student Emily Kothe - this is the first concrete evidence young Australians don't know their fruit and vegetable basics.

"When we asked participants to identify the vegetables in a beef hotpot recipe we gave them, only 78 percent classed canned tomato as a vegetable, and even less identified onion as contributing towards their vegetable intake (71 percent). One in 10 incorrectly thought the beef would contribute towards their daily fruit and [vegetable intake](#)," said Ms Kothe.

"To get young people eating enough fruit and vegetables every day to be healthy all their lives, they firstly have to have a grasp on how much they should be eating. They also need to have enough know-how to understand serving sizes and to identify what foods are [fruits and vegetables](#)."

The [Australian Government](#) recommends adults have two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables each day, which is linked with a lower risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity and some cancers.

Accredited practicing dietitian Julie Gilbert said: "Fruit and vegetables have plenty of vitamins and minerals, like vitamin C, folate and magnesium, and are a good source of fibre. They are also low in

saturated fat, salt and sugar. These are the foods that help people look and feel their best.

"Australia's last national nutrition survey found 19 to 24 years olds were the most likely of all age groups to not eat enough fruit and/or vegetables."

Ms. Gilbert called on young Australians to take the 'pledge' to eat more fruit and vegetables as part of the 2012 Australia's Healthy Weight Week campaign, run by the Dietitians Association of Australia in January.

"For young people, grabbing a piece of fruit to eat in the car or at their desk, adding some cooked frozen vegies to their night meal, or having canned [fruit](#) with yogurt for dessert is fine. It's just important they up their intake," said Ms. Gilbert.

Provided by University of Sydney

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