

Australian women miss guidelines around healthy eating and exercise

September 26 2012

Women in Australia are exercising less and most are not eating nearly enough vegetables, researchers have found.

Drawing data from one of the biggest studies ever conducted with Australian women – the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's [Health](#) (ALSWH) – researchers from The University of Queensland and the University of Newcastle have compared women's lifestyles with national [guidelines](#) for [good health](#) behaviours and screening.

The report, [Adherence to health guidelines: Findings from the ALSWH](#), was launched today by the Honourable Tanya Plibersek, Minister for Health, at the new HMRI Building in Newcastle.

The study reports that fewer women than ever are meeting guidelines around healthy weight, with almost half of all the women surveyed considered overweight or obese.

Women aged between 34 and 39 years have gained the most weight since the survey was last conducted, with 45 per cent of the group now overweight or obese, up from 40 per cent in 2009.

This group also saw a decline in the percentage of women engaging in the recommended 30 minutes of [physical activity](#) a day, with only 44 per cent managing to complete half an hour of exercise on most days each week.

University of Queensland Professor Wendy Brown, one of the report's lead authors, said the findings reflected how changes in women's lives impacted their physical activity.

"Most women are also failing to meet [dietary guidelines](#), particularly around consuming five servings of vegetables a day," she said.

"Less than one per cent of women aged 35-39, only two per cent of women aged 61-66 years and eight per cent of women aged 86-91 years are eating the recommended amount."

Just as worryingly, researchers found that nutritionally poor, energy dense 'extras' made up an increasingly large part of most women's diets, with most eating more than the recommended four servings per day.

ALSWH Co-Director, University of Newcastle Professor Julie Byles, said the study revealed that messages around quitting smoking were getting through.

"Smoking rates are down, although women living in rural areas or with a lower educational status are still more likely to continue to smoke," Professor Byles said.

Women are also heeding advice regarding alcohol consumption and health screenings including blood pressure and cholesterol checks.

The study also shows that, contrary to current guidelines, most women consume alcohol during pregnancy, indicating a need for pregnant [women](#) to pay particular attention to a healthy lifestyle.

More information: www.alswh.org.au/

Provided by University of Queensland

Citation: Australian women miss guidelines around healthy eating and exercise (2012, September 26) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-09-australian-women-guidelines-healthy.html>

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