

Women urged to eat more vegetables

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Less than two per cent of Australian women are eating the recommended five servings of vegetables a day

(Medical Xpress)—Less than two per cent of Australian women are eating the recommended five servings of vegetables a day, according to new research from The University of Queensland.

Research led by Professor Gita Mishra from UQ's School of Population Health examined the eating habits of three groups of Australian [women](#) – women aged 31 to 36, [pregnant women](#) aged 31 to 36 and women aged 50 to 55.

Professor Mishra said the study revealed worrying findings with

women's diets.

"We compared women's diets to the updated Australian Dietary Guidelines and found that most needed more than two additional servings of vegetables to make up the recommended five," she said.

Other findings included:

- Less than 10 per cent of all women aged 31 to 36 consumed the recommended intake of grains.
- Fewer than one in four women met the guidelines for daily serves of dairy products, with only one per cent of women aged 50 to 55 reaching the recommended four daily serves of dairy.
- In terms of Body Mass Index, 54 per cent of the women aged 50 to 55 were overweight or obese, compared with 44 per cent of women aged 31 to 36 and 41 per cent of pregnant women aged 31 to 36, based on their pre-pregnancy weight.
- Almost half the women aged 31 to 36 (49 per cent), more than half the pregnant women (64 per cent) in the same age group and women aged 50 to 55 (55 per cent) were sedentary or had low physical activity levels.

Professor Mishra said most women needed to increase their consumption of most food groups.

"The good news is that these [dietary guidelines](#) are achievable and reaching the recommended daily vegetable intake could be as easy as adding an extra serving of vegetables to each meal," she said.

"Given the high rate of obesity among Australian women, it's important to remember any increases in daily servings of dairy and meat would require a corresponding decrease in foods high in saturated fats and added sugar to avoid weight gain."

The Australian Dietary Guidelines encourage Australians to eat a nutritious diet that includes a variety of foods from the five main food groups, and to limit the intake of alcohol and foods containing saturated fats, added salt and added sugar.

Poor diet is associated with an increased risk of developing a range of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type two diabetes and some cancers.

Dietary guidelines form a core component of Australia's disease prevention strategies.

The Australian Dietary Guidelines are available at www.eatforhealth.gov.au.

UQ researchers have also found that a lack of exercise is costing the Australian healthcare system \$40 million a year for women alone.

Provided by University of Queensland

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