

Healthy Eating standards still not fully adopted among YMCA after-school programs

September 9 2016

Healthy Eating standards represent a means of increasing fruit, vegetable, whole grain, and water intake among adolescents by providing healthy snacks in conjunction with education on healthy eating. For these reasons, the YMCA of the US adopted these standards for all its after-school programs in November of 2011. However, a study of YMCAs in South Carolina found that none of the programs were meeting every aspect of the Healthy Eating standards and many were deficient in several areas.

Researchers from the University of South Carolina, University of Kentucky, and Wake Forest School of Medicine observed [snack](#) time in a stratified sample of 20 YMCA-operated after-school programs in South Carolina, in the 2014–15 school year. The programs were visited on four nonconsecutive, unannounced days to record type of food and beverage served for snack, how the snack was served, how the staff engaged with the children, as well as staff eating behaviors.

"Compared with other studies, YMCA after-school programs served fruits and vegetables on a greater number of days, served dessert at a similar rate, served sugar-sweetened beverages at the same rate or on fewer days per week, and served water on a slightly greater number of days," lead author Michael W. Beets, MEd, MPH, PhD, Department of Exercise Science, Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina, said. "No programs met all five Healthy Eating standards. Only

a single program had 100% compliance for staff verbally promoting healthy eating, sitting with children during snack, and delivering education every day, but no program served the snack family-style every day."

Out of the 20 YMCAs studied, five served fruit and vegetables every day, six served water daily, five served no [sugar-sweetened beverages](#), and nine served no sugar-sweetened food. Additionally, two served whole grains when serving a grain as a snack. Just three after-school programs had staff verbally promoting healthy eating and the same number delivered health education; five served snacks family style. Only a single program had 100% compliance for staff verbally promoting [healthy eating](#), sitting with children during snack, and delivering education every day.

Although the estimates of food and beverages served at after-school programs run by the YMCA were similar or higher to those reported in previous studies, the inability of the programs to achieve the standards and highlights the difficulty of implementing Healthy Eating guidelines in full. The researchers concluded that additional assistance is necessary to help practitioners fully achieve the goal of meeting all Healthy Eating standards.

More information: Michael W. Beets et al. Compliance With the Healthy Eating Standards in YMCA After-School Programs, *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* (2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jneb.2016.05.012](#)

Provided by Elsevier

Citation: Healthy Eating standards still not fully adopted among YMCA after-school programs

(2016, September 9) retrieved 11 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-09-healthy-standards-fully-ymca-after-school.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.