

# National Action Plan to Promote Health Through Increased Fruit and Vegetable Consumption 2010 Report Card

## KEY FINDINGS

In 2005, a National Action Plan was developed, providing a new and comprehensive approach for improved public health through increased fruit and vegetable consumption. Building on that framework, the objective of the 2010 National Action Plan was to provide a Report Card to determine how much progress has been made since 2005 *and* offer updated strategies for creating a healthier America by closing the persistent, ongoing gap between actual and recommended fruit and vegetable consumption.

... over the past five years, some progress has been made in dealing with this chronic public health issue of inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption. Overall, however, the results have been mixed, ranging from positive changes to ongoing problem areas where change has been slow or non-existent.

As this report shows, resolving this public health issue depends on the efforts and success of many stakeholders who impact America's food choices and eating habits:

- Nutrition education, promotion, and marketing groups
- Growers, processors, and supermarket retailers
- Restaurants and other food service establishments
- Schools, child care, and other institutions feeding children and adolescents
- Workplaces
- Health care community
- State and federal governments




All of these organizations have an important role to play in America's fight against chronic diseases and health-related problems that are directly related to poor nutrition and inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption.

The scientific literature and data comparisons included in this report show that, over the past five years, some progress has been made in dealing with this chronic public health issue of inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption. Overall, however, the results have been mixed, ranging from positive changes to ongoing problem areas where change has been slow or non-existent.

The 2010 National Action Plan Report Card outlines key research findings and assigns grades to strategies that have been in place since 2005. These strategies, if implemented, would improve public health in America by increasing fruit and vegetable consumption. The following Report Card offers a visual snapshot about the progress that has been made towards achieving this important public health goal.



## National Action Plan, 2010 Report Card

Grade	Activity
<p>A = Met or exceeded goal</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>WIC Fruit &amp; Vegetable Vouchers:</b> The introduction of fruit and vegetable vouchers in the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants and Children, where no vouchers existed before, exceeded expectations. These changes allowed broad inclusion of fruits and vegetables, previously excluded for 30 years. While certainly the value of fruit and vegetable vouchers could be higher, their inclusion represents substantial progress.</li> <li>✓ <b>Fruits &amp; Veggies—More Matters Initiative:</b> The goal of developing and disseminating a behaviorally-focused communications strategy to be used consistently by business and community organizations in efforts to increase fruit and vegetable consumption was completed with the development and launch of the Fruits &amp; Veggies—More Matters® communications campaign in 2007. With mothers as the core target audience, this campaign provides supporting messages and materials about fruits and veggies. Seventy-six percent of supermarkets nationwide help disseminate the message; more than 1800 products carry the Fruits &amp; Veggies—More Matters logo on their label; an extensive consumer website and social media outreach effort is in place; and messaging is disseminated through state health departments, extension offices, and other educators and health professionals. The ultimate goal is continued expansion and use of this communications campaign.</li> <li>✓ <b>Fresh Fruit &amp; Vegetable Program:</b> Expansion of the Fresh Fruit &amp; Vegetable Program, a federally-funded initiative which provides free fresh fruit and vegetable snacks to students, met goal. While the ultimate goal is to expand this program into additional schools for millions of students in the future, the goal over the past five years was to ensure that funding was available to allow some schools in every state to participate in this program.</li> </ul>
<p>B = Substantial progress toward goal</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>NIH Nutrition &amp; Obesity Research:</b> Progress was made with increased funding for nutrition and obesity research at the National Institute of Health. Unfortunately, NIH projects specifically for fruits and vegetables, as a percent of NIH nutrition projects, increased only slightly from 2000 to 2008.</li> </ul>
<p>C = Some progress toward goal</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Restaurant Menus:</b> Greater availability of fruits and vegetables on menus in restaurant and fast food establishments, offering customers an expanded variety of healthy food choices away from home, demonstrates that some progress has been made. This coupled with mom's reported ease in getting her family to eat more fruits and vegetables at fast food restaurants is slight but positive movement.</li> <li>✓ <b>School Food:</b> Progress has been made toward better alignment of school food offerings with the <i>2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans</i> (Dietary Guidelines), as shown by an increasing number of schools serving a la carte vegetables, schools with wellness policies, and the creation and expansion of a voluntary Healthier U.S. Schools Challenge that recognizes schools that have created healthier environments through promotion of nutrition and physical activity. However, more work remains to be done, especially in increasing the use of salad bars, fruits, and vegetables as part of healthy vending options in schools, and implementation of the Institute of Medicine's recommendations to bring the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program in line with Dietary Guidelines.</li> <li>✓ <b>CDC Budget:</b> Progress was made in the area of increased funding for Centers for Disease Control &amp; Prevention's (CDC) Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (DNPAO) to help combat obesity among Americans. Half of all states, however, still do not have a CDC-funded nutrition and physical activity program to prevent obesity and other chronic diseases.</li> </ul>

Grade	Activity
<p>D = Minimal Progress</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Reduced Advertising of Unhealthy Foods to Children:</b> A modest shift away from advertising low-nutrition foods to children demonstrates some progress; however, the vast majority of industry food and beverage ads geared to children and youth still promote foods with poor nutritional quality, contributing to an environment that continues to put their health at risk.</li> <li>✓ <b>Children’s Fruit &amp; Vegetable Consumption:</b> There appears to be some positive momentum, in terms of increased consumption of fruits and vegetables among children, particularly those less than six years old. For this age group, fruit consumption increased by 11% and vegetable consumption grew by 3% over the past 5 years. Despite these increases, 88% of children do not eat their recommended amount of fruit and 92% do not eat their recommended amount of vegetables.</li> <li>✓ <b>Disease-Prevention &amp; Wellness in Health Care:</b> More emphasis on disease-prevention and wellness efforts needs to be undertaken by the health care community through improved health education, diet, and nutrition services. Currently, less than 15% of physician offices provide or order diet or nutrition services. With two-thirds of adults either overweight or obese, these services are not being provided to the extent they are needed.</li> <li>✓ <b>Agriculture Policy Alignment with Health Policy:</b> While some improvements have been made, agriculture policy still does not align with health policy in this nation, as evidenced by the following findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nutrition education as a percent of nutrition assistance programs has not increased over the past decade.</li> <li>• The percent of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) spending on fruits and vegetables relative to other foods and their importance in nutrition policy is not in alignment with Dietary Guidelines.</li> <li>• The percent of U.S. Department of Health &amp; Human Services (HHS) research dollars spent specifically on fruits and vegetables has remained flat.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>F = Moving Away From Target</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Adult Fruit &amp; Vegetable Consumption:</b> The consumption of fruits and vegetables remains relatively flat for the overall population, and only a modest increase can be seen in the number of adults who achieve their fruit goal. However, the percent who achieve their vegetable consumption goal is declining.</li> <li>✓ <b>Advertising of Healthy Foods:</b> While advertising may be shifting away from low-nutrition foods, it has not been replaced with advertising for more nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables. In fact, advertising of healthy foods has decreased over time. With the recommended consumption of fruits and vegetables at nearly half of all food that should be consumed, nearly half of all food advertising should also focus on fruits and vegetables.</li> <li>✓ <b>Teen Fruit &amp; Vegetable Consumption:</b> Consumption has declined over the past 5 years among teens, from 1.84 cups to 1.76 cups on average per day. This trend is consistent with a decline in the availability of high school salad bars and the minimal number of fruits and vegetables offered in high school vending machines.</li> <li>✓ <b>Cost of Inadequate Fruit &amp; Vegetable Consumption:</b> The economic cost attributable specifically to inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption grew substantially over the past 10 years, from \$29.3 billion to \$56.2 billion, or roughly 9% each year. This negative trend is a result of virtually no change in fruit and vegetable consumption, coupled with the growing health care cost of treating diet-related diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and stroke.</li> </ul>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To increase fruit and vegetable consumption, strategies outlined in the 2010 National Action Plan Report Card must be implemented. Each of these key strategies provide recommendations for addressing America's public health needs and, if implemented, would begin to close the gap that exists between actual and recommended fruit and vegetable consumption in this country.

The strategies and recommendations identified in this report include:

1. Increase the accessibility of fruits and vegetables in communities, schools, worksites, and restaurants.
  - a. Expand the number of vending machines offering healthy food choices, making fruits and vegetable more accessible to people of all ages.
  - b. Double the number of fruit and vegetable items on restaurant menus.
  - c. Implement the Institute of Medicine's recommendations to bring school meals in line with Dietary Guidelines.
  - d. Increase the availability of salad bars in schools.
  - e. Expand the USDA Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program in schools.
2. Strengthen nutrition education programs and promotion efforts that give consumers the skills and motivation they need to make better food choices.
  - a. Reduce the marketing of low-nutrition foods, and increase marketing of nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables.
  - b. Expand the use of the Fruits & Veggies—More Matters campaign and core messages as a unifying message and call to action by growers/processors, supermarkets, educators, and public health professionals.
  - c. Increase nutrition education as a percent of federal nutrition assistance programs, including the use of effective marketing techniques.
  - d. Expand health education, specifically preventative diet and nutrition services, in the health care arena.
3. Align federal funding priorities to be consistent with federal Dietary Guidelines.
  - a. Double the current amount of USDA spending on fruits and vegetables to align funding with the priority given to this food group in dietary recommendations.
  - b. Elevate nutrition education as a USDA funding priority so that it represents 2.7% of total nutrition assistance spending, or \$1 billion in additional or reallocated annual spending, with a particular emphasis on increasing fruit and vegetable consumption.
  - c. Allocate NIH funding based on the disease-prevention benefits of fruit and vegetable consumption, which would amount to \$100 million in new or reallocated funds specifically targeted to fruits and vegetables.
  - d. Bring CDC fruit and vegetable spending in line with chronic disease health risks by adding or reallocating \$45 million specifically for fruits and vegetables.

## CONCLUSION

The 2010 National Action Plan provides an outline of strategies that, taken together, will create an environment where the healthy choice is the easy and desirable choice. While several key strategies can be accomplished by the private sector, many changes require alignment of federal funding priorities with Dietary Guidelines. Simply put, closing the fruit and vegetable consumption gap will require closing the federal fruit and vegetable spending gap.

To view the full *National Action Plan to Promote Health Through Increased Fruit and Vegetable Consumption 2010 Report Card*, visit [www.NFVA.org](http://www.NFVA.org).