



For Immediate Release:
Thursday, October 1, 2009
Media Contact:
Tania J. Charette, MPH
Media Coordinator
(801) 538-6423

News Release

Utahns Not Eating Their Fruits and Veggies *National report should help state reverse the trend*

A new report shows Utah is not meeting national goals for consumption of fruits and vegetables. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports just 32% of Utah adults meet the goal of eating at least 2 fruits daily and just 25% eat at least 3 veggies a day. Adolescents in grades 9-12 fare even more poorly, with 30% meeting the 2 fruits goal and 11% eating 3 vegetables daily.

“Most of us already know how important it is to eat fruits and vegetables to preserve our health and prevent disease,” said Utah Department of Health (UDOH) dietitian Patrice Isabella. “But just getting fresh produce can be difficult for many families for a variety of reasons,” she added.

The report card points out that schools may not provide enough produce in foods offered outside of regular school meals, such as a la carte and vending. And some communities don’t have full-service grocery stores within walking distance for residents who don’t have transportation.

Other key report highlights include:

- Utah does not have a state-level policy for improving the availability of stores that offer healthy foods.
- Only 25% of middle and high schools in Utah offer fruits and non-fried vegetables in school stores or vending machines.
- Utah is one of 29 states that do not have a state policy for ‘Farm to School’ programs. These programs link schools with local farms and can help increase fruit and vegetable access, as well as students’ knowledge of nutrition and agriculture.

-MORE-

Page 2 of 2 – Utahns Not Eating Their Fruits and Veggies

The good news is Utah is one of just 20 states with an active Food Policy Council. The group's mission is to educate and inform the public and policy makers about relevant food system issues, and advocate for policies that support and strengthen a sustainable community food system.

The report card lists in detail produce consumption rates across the state and will help UDOH target the communities and schools that need the most help. The information will also help advocates shape policies that will help promote healthy eating in all neighborhoods.

“We're very glad to have this new information,” said Isabella. “Now we'll pull together government, health professionals, businesses, schools, farmers and community members to talk about how to make healthier food more available and affordable,” she added. “As has been shown in other states, this can be a key difference in helping people eat better and stay healthier.”

The *State Indicator Report on Fruits and Vegetables, 2009* is available from the CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity at <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/indicatorreport>.

###

The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.