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There’s plenty of room for improvement when Americans eat away from home

Resources added to the FLP/WNEP resource database

There’s plenty of room for improvement when Americans eat away from home

By Susan Nitzke

The 2005-08 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) reveals some important trends:

• Compared to data from thirty years ago, American adults and children over age 2 are consuming almost 200 more calories per day. The average calorie intake of Americans was 2,067 in 2005-08, compared to 1,875 in 1977-78. Although 200 calories may not seem like much (e.g., three cookies), this amount on a daily basis over time could be a very important contributor to the current obesity epidemic in the U.S.
• In 2005-08, adults consumed 69% of their calories at home and children ages 2-19 consumed 67% at home. Fast food places are the biggest source of food away from home (264 calories), followed by restaurants with table service (209 calories).
• Foods consumed at home tend to be more nutritious than foods away from home. Foods eaten away from home have more total fat, saturated fat, sodium and cholesterol per 1,000 calories and less calcium, fiber and iron than foods eaten at home.
• When they eat at home, Americans eat more fruit, dairy, and whole grains, but less vegetables (partly because tomato sauce and potatoes are so prevalent in meals eaten away from home).

Implications for Extension Educators:
A related article on fast food was summarized in the Nutrition for Family Living newsletter this past February (http://www.uwex.edu/ces/wnep/specialist/nfl/mmpdfs/1202.pdf#page=1). These findings document the need for effective nutrition education to help families plan practical ways to eat more balanced, nutritious meals and be aware of portion sizes – at home and away from home.

Source:
Resources added to the FLP resource database

*What’s on Your Plate?*,

https://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/apps/flrc/tch_res2/resourceDetails.cfm?rid=9499