

# Women, children, improve diets since 1977

WASHINGTON — American women and their young children consume less fat and more carbohydrate today than when surveyed in 1977, a U.S. Department of Agriculture report released this week shows.

These changes conform to recommendations in the 1980 first edition of "Dietary Guidelines for Americans" as well as the 1985 second edition, both published by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services.

In 1985, women reported diets that provided 37 percent of total calories from fat—down from 41 percent in 1977, and 46 percent of total calories from carbohydrate—up from 41 percent in 1977. Total calories consumed rose six percent since 1977. Children one to five years of age also had diets with relatively less fat and more carbohydrate than in 1977.

Both women and children reported drinking more lowfat or skim milk and using more grain products and soft drinks in 1985 than in 1977. They reported eating less meat separately and more as part of mixtures.

Women's intakes, on average, were above the Recommended Dietary Allowance for eight of 15 nutrients, regardless of the women's income, race or where they lived. However, the women failed to meet the RDA for vitamin B-6, vitamin E, folacin, calcium, iron, magnesium and zinc; again, regardless of income, race, or where they lived.

Information on diets of women and children in 1985 is contained in the first report from USDA's "Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals" conducted by the Human Nutrition Information Service. Information on the food and nutrient intakes for one day in the spring of 1985 by women 19 to 50 years of age and their children one to five years of age is compared with similar information collected in spring of 1977 as part of USDA's Nationwide Food Consumption Survey 1977-78.

The Continuing Survey is the first nationwide dietary intake survey to be conducted on a regular basis in this country, said John W. Bode, USDA assistant secretary for food and consumer services, and this report sets a record for timely release of information from a national dietary survey—release within six months after the data were collected.

"We are very proud to be able to provide such timely information," Bode said. "As the series of reports grows from year to year, it will become a basic tool, increasingly more useful, in tracking the dietary status of Americans."

The women and children in the survey are being interviewed six times during a one-year period to collect data on food intake for six different days. The new report covers only the first of these days. A future report will present the data for all six days.



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