

How To Be Happy: Eat Lots of Fruits and Vegetables

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The adage “you are what you eat” is truer than we may have thought. Public health researchers and economists at the U.K.’s University of Warwick have found that [people who eat seven servings of vegetables and fruits a day are the happiest](#).

Count them: How many servings have you eaten today?

For their [study \(pdf\)](#), the researchers looked at the eating habits of 80,000 people in Britain, using the results from the Welsh Health Survey of 2007-2010, the Scottish Health Survey of 2008 and the Health Survey of England in 2008. The researchers found that the more servings of fruits and vegetables that people ate a day, the more their mental well-being seemed to rise. The effect peaked at seven servings a day.

In the U.K., most people eat far too few fruits and vegetables, the researchers found. One-quarter of the population was found to eat only one portion a day or none at all; only a tenth ate the “magic number” of seven or more daily servings. Americans are no better off with [most asking for French fries when told to eat vegetables](#), a finding sadly reinforced by reports of students [dumping school lunches](#) full of fruits, vegetables and whole grains into the garbage. In 2010, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that [only 26 percent of adults in the U.S. eat vegetables](#) more than three times a day.

Many Western governments, including the U.S., recommend eating five servings a day to stave off cardiovascular disease and [lower cancer risk](#). One serving of fruits or vegetables is equivalent to 80 grams (a small banana, a medium apple, a small carrot);

five servings is roughly equivalent to 2 1/2 cups of fruits and/or vegetables.



How About a Health Policy To Promote Well-being?

But as the Warwick researchers point out, government health policies do not specifically recommend consumption of fruits and vegetables for mental health and well-being, but for physical health — and perhaps the should be.

Noting that there is a “current interest among governments in the measurement of psychological well-being,” the researchers point out that “although it is known that people’s physical health conditions enter significantly in well-being equations,” little research has been done on “exactly how happiness interacts with health.” In particular, contemporary research about psychological well-being has not addressed the “consequences of people’s dietary choices (except indirectly as part of research into the effects of obesity).”

The Warwick researchers’ findings are to be published in the journal [Social Indicators Research](#).

There have been studies linking fast food to depression and [research has shown that high-fat foods can be addictive](#), meaning that, once you’ve eaten the likes of an [Egg McMuffin](#), you still feel hungry (for another Egg McMuffin or the equivalent) and not satisfied. Research about foods that can provide long-term well-being, rather than the infamous “junk food high,” is all the more valuable. Rather than telling us that what we’re doing (eating unhealthy foods) is bad for us, such studies point out something pro-active that we can do (fill up on the fruits and vegetables and hold the fries).

So eat those seven-a-day!

Read more: <http://www.care2.com/causes/be-happy-eat-lots-fruits-vegetable.html#ixzz2DRh8aKoz>