



Project "Fruit and vegetable consumption of sales apprentices"

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Situation: The national campaign "5 a day" promotes the consumption of vegetables (veg.) and fruits with the aim of health and well-being of the Swiss population. Existing data show that the current consumption of veg. and fruits by adults in Switzerland is far below the recommendations of "5 a day" (Teilauswertung Studie Darmkrebs-Früherkennung (DKF) in der Schweiz 2005).

Aim: The study investigates the consumption of veg. and fruits of sales apprentices and compares it with existing data and with the recommendations of the campaign "5 a day". The assumption was that adolescent persons have an insufficient intake and a lower consumption of veg. and fruits than adults. Furthermore we assumed that young women eat more veg. and fruits than young men. In addition we wanted to explore attitudes and awareness concerning veg. and fruit consumption.

Method:

- Tool: Focused 24 hour recall (written questionnaire) to assess veg. and fruit consumption on one specific test day plus additional questions.
- Subjects: 3 groups of sales apprentices, working at Coop (supermarkets)
- Data collection: in the course of a study week held in two places (Zurich, Kriens), unannounced, on three different days. Short introduction to explain the questionnaire, written questionnaire filled in by apprentices on spot.

Results: The questionnaire was given to 85 subjects of which all participated. 28 % were male and 72 % female, in age 18-25 years (median 20). Most of them (79%) were living by their parents/relatives.

On the test day 9% consumed less than one portion of fruit and veg., 18% 1-2 portions, 25% 3-4 portions and 48 % five or more portions. The median number of portions for fruits was 1.5, for veg. 2.0, for juices 0.5 portions which made 4.5 in total. The total median number of portions was equal for men and women. 62 % of the participants indicated that the test day was a normal day. Furthermore they had to assess their daily average consumption for fruits, veg. and juices. The median total number of portions was 2.0.

The following fruits were favourites ordered by their rank: bananas, apples, berries, oranges, grapes and for veg.: leaf salad, tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, peppers.

The main reason for not consuming more veg. and fruits was that the subjects did not think of it (36 % for fruits, 28 % for veg.) followed by the preference of other foods (22 % for fruits, 24 % veg.). 80 % believe that veg. and fruit consumption is important for their health however only 21% pay attention to a healthy diet.

54% of the participants have heard of the campaign 5 a day and out of them 67 % know the correct message.

Discussion: As assumed the apprentices did not reach the recommendations of the 5 a day campaign. The hypothesis that the total consumption of veg. and fruits in females is higher than in males could not be confirmed based on test day results. Compared with the DKF-study (adults aged 40-80) the self-assessed average consumption is lower: only 15.3 % consume four or more portions against 40.7 % (DKF).

The data of test day and average day showed a big discrepancy. Possible explanations could be underestimation of average consumption by not reporting all meals (snacks) or all types of veg. and fruits. On the other hand the detailed list provided for the test day may have led them to report at least something. According to apprentices it was a normal day, but the study week has to be considered as a special environment (access to canteen). A further possible influence could be due to seasonal availability of some fruits.

We assess that the data quality is good. The participation of the selected group was complete and the questionnaire was well understood and filled in seriously. However sales apprentices might only partly be representative for adolescents of this age group. Their working environment may make them more aware of dietary questions than it might in other occupations. Knowledge of the campaign 5 a day was very probably influenced by the fact that Coop promotes the campaign.

Efforts of „5 a day“ campaign should be continued with special attention on younger age groups. Efforts should also be directed to reduce the gap between knowledge and implementation of recommendations into daily life.