



American children are not eating enough fruit and vegetables and their diet lacks key nutrients.

SCHOOL MEALS --- KEY TO BETTER CHILD HEALTH

A recent review by the Institute of Medicine, at the request of the US Department of Agriculture, reported that many American children are not eating enough fruit and vegetables and their diet lacks key nutrients. Children 5-18 ate 50% or less of the vegetables recommended by the US Dietary Guidelines, and fruit intake was 50% or less for children ages 9-18.

School children in the US are getting too many calories from fat found in foods such as pizza and hamburgers, and sugars from candy and soda. The report focuses on school meal programs as a way to help prevent long-term health problems.

NUTRITION AT THE CENTER

President-elect Obama's choice for US Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, said at a recent news conference that he would put "nutrition at the center of all food assistance programs". This is a clear signal that the USDA will get involved when Congress moves to reauthorize school meal programs this year. Efforts to overhaul these programs come as obesity among children has been steadily rising. Nationally, approximately 1/3 of US children are considered overweight or obese.

HOW MANY SCHOOL MEALS CAN YOU EAT?

Say a typical school year is about 172 days (out of 365 days) in a year. That's almost half (about 47%) of the time that students are in school each year. Now, say a typical school serves two meals, ie, breakfast and lunch (no supper) each day. That's the majority (about two-thirds) of each day's meals for almost half a year. Over a whole year, if students ate both school meals every school day, they'd be getting about one-third of their meals at school. That's a lot of meals --- and DRF is committed to making sure that it's done right.

Contact Information

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