

Determinants of children's fruit and vegetable consumption

Background

Western Australian children are eating fruit and vegetables in amounts inconsistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines. With a metropolitan-rural health divide apparent, a more thorough understanding of the determinants of regional and remote WA children's fruit and vegetable intake will aid the development of strategies to increase intake.

WAEvidence

Individual level influencers



School, internet and magazines key source of children's nutrition knowledge and skills. Knowledge-action gap evident.

Children's attitude to fruit and vegetables often associated with convenience. When available, many children "devoured" healthy foods.



Household/interpersonal level influencers

Parental nutrition knowledge and cooking skills varied considerably across WA. 'Go for 2&5' message thought to be well known.



Role modelling believed to be highly important, but often lacking. Intergenerational skill sharing thought to be limited.

School/institutional level influencers



Schools thought to contribute substantially to children's fruit and veg intake. Hands-on learning and fun focused programs most effective.

Health service provision valued but limited in many locations. More collaboration required to ensure consistent messaging.



Community level influencers

Availability of F&V inconsistent across WA. Shorter food supply chains and direct retail options increased availability.



Community spaces including gardens, the local swimming pool and sporting clubs used to deliver education and awareness raising

Public policy level influencer:



Healthy eating policies in food outlets highly regarded. Strategies included better education for managers regarding fruit and vegetable ordering, promotion and community advocacy.

Strategies to increase intake

- Social media/internet could be harnessed to reinforce health messages in the home environment.
- Health promotion service delivery targeting children, families and schools should incorporate a role modelling component.
- Service providers are encouraged to collaborate more effectively to deliver consistent, ongoing health messaging, and focus on 'fun' rather than health.
- 'Community hubs', such as gardens, could be used by health service providers as places to reinforce health messaging.
- Health promotion service providers could assist local community members to advocate for healthy improvements to their food supply and, where possible, work with store managers to improve stocking and promotion of fruit and vegetables.