

Fruit not appealing to one in five kids!

ARE your children eating enough fruit and veg? Probably not according to latest research which is bad news for their health, as Victoria Temple reports...

EAT your greens - it's a familiar plea. Yet many parents struggle to get their youngsters to eat enough fresh fruit or veg and it seems that the healthy eating message just isn't getting through.

Eating fruit or vegetables is vital in preventing cancers, heart disease and other conditions yet as many as one in five children eat no fruit at all.

And the rest of them don't do much better. It seems children are only eating a third of the fruit and veg that they should be.

A survey carried out by The Cancer Research Campaign and the supermarket chain, Iceland, looked at the eating habits of 11-16 year olds and found that, on average, children are eating less than 13 portions of fruit and veg a week.

Yet health officials recommend eating at least 35 portions of fruit and vegetables a week, which means most children are only eating one-third of the minimum recommended amount.

The figures come as no surprise to Becky Hirst, food and health project officer at Health Promotion Gloucestershire. A survey last year revealed that 11% of people living in Gloucester never eat fruit, compared with 8% in Cheltenham. Gloucester people were also less likely to eat vegetables than people elsewhere in the county - 27% of people eat veg more than once a day compared to 31% in Cheltenham or 33% in Stroud.

"We should be eating five portions of fruit or veg a day," said Becky. "After giving up smoking the next best thing you can do to prevent cancer is eat five pieces of fruit or veg a day, and starting healthy eating habits as a child is vital."

But it can be a bit of an up hill struggle given the level of advertising to tempt children to eat less healthy snacks.

"There are so many more tempting things on offer," said Becky.

"There's so much money behind sweets,

"We should be eating five portions of fruit or veg a day."

Becky Hirst, food and health project officer at Health Promotion Gloucestershire

chocolate and soft drinks. Harry Potter is being used to advertise soft drinks and crisp brands have their 'Books for Schools' tokens.

It means that these statistics really aren't surprising."

Education is vital, said Becky, not just for children, but for parents and professionals.

The health promotion team is encouraging schools in the county to get on board and is hosting a Gloucestershire Food in Schools Seminar next Tuesday.

"It will offer schools an opportunity to develop a 'whole school approach'."

Initiatives are already underway to try and get their children to eat their greens.

A Government scheme aims to get the ball rolling. Modelled on the old scheme of free milk in schools, the Government will introduce a new National School Fruit Scheme.

By 2004 every child in nursery and aged four to six will be entitled to a free piece of fruit each school day.

It's a move that's been welcomed by health campaigners, but it's still several years off and it's important that children get the healthy eating message now.

"It is very concerning that so many children are eating so little fruit and vegetables," said Dr Lesley Walker, of The Cancer Research Campaign.

"There is growing evidence to suggest a good diet can reduce cancer deaths by up to a third. While cancer is a disease which generally affects older people, it is so important to lay the foundations of a healthy lifestyle early on.

We need to do all we can to encourage children to be used to eating a balanced diet before they reach adulthood."

The Cancer Research Campaign has been working with Iceland supermarket to carry out the research and is working with the supermarket to find more ways of getting fruit.

Sara Jamison, Iceland's marketing director, said: "Every parent knows that encouraging children to eat healthily can be a battle."

"It's not always easy to keep a kitchen stocked up with fresh fruit and vegetables if you're leading a busy lifestyle and find it hard to shop regularly."

"Frozen fruit and veg are a practical and healthy alternative."

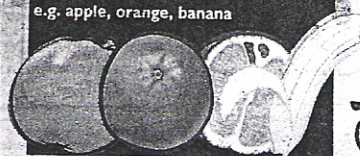
"Frozen ready-prepared vegetables have vitamins and nutrients locked in and require the minimum of fuss to cook. They can be a great help for parents looking for quick and healthy meal solutions."

■ IT'S DELICIOUS: Just the look on this young girl's face proves that fruit is good for you.

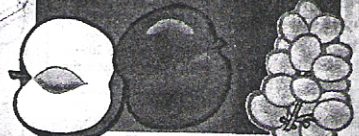


Each of these is **ONE PORTION OF FRUIT & VEG**

ONE WHOLE MEDIUM-SIZED FRUIT OR VEGETABLE
e.g. apple, orange, banana



A COUPLE OF SMALL FRUITS, OR A CUP OF VERY SMALL FRUITS
e.g. 2 plums, a cup of grapes or berries



1/2 - 1 TABLESPOON OF DRIED FRUITS
e.g. dates, sultanas, prunes, apricots



A PIECE OF A BIG FRUIT

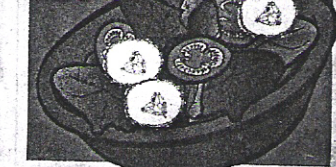
Half a grapefruit, a wedge of melon, a couple of rings of pineapple, half an avocado



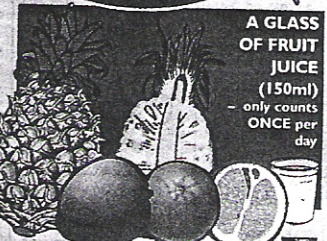
TWO TABLESPOONS OF RAW, COOKED, FROZEN OR CANNED VEGETABLES



A BOWL OF SALAD



A GLASS OF FRUIT JUICE (150ml)
- only counts ONCE per day



But DON'T count a glass of squash or a fruit "drink" or a fruit yoghurt or fruit and nut chocolate or a tablespoon of jam. **There's just not enough fruit in them to make a portion!**

EAT 5 OR MORE PORTIONS OF FRUIT & VEG EVERY DAY!

Mixed fruit facts!

A SURVEY by the Cancer Research Campaign revealed children eat less than 13 portions of fruit or vegetables each week.

■ Fruit contains natural sugar, or glucose, which is not only energy for the body but can help stimulate the brain.

■ A British study found that children who ate fruit more than once a day had better lung function. Eating fruit also reduces the symptoms of asthma and bronchitis.

■ A diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables can help in tackling obesity. One in ten six-year-olds may now be obese.

■ A little known secret about watermelons is they contain as much iron for the body as spinach.

■ Carrots and sweetcorn are the most popular vegetables among children with over

half naming one of these as the vegetable they like most.

■ Peas and broccoli are the only other vegetables to be mentioned as a favourite by more than one in 20 children.

■ Sprouts are by far children's least favourite vegetable, with two in five (39%) saying they hate them more than any other listed.

■ Strawberries come top of the list as children's favourite fruit, mentioned by one in three - almost twice as many as the second placed fruit, apples (18%).

■ Bananas and kiwi fruit are also quite popular, with both being chosen by one in ten children as their favourite fruit.

■ Tomatoes and avocados top the list of children's most hated fruit, mentioned by 23% and 22% respectively.