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John Humphrys accosts me in my pyjamas
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Only 12% of Britons meet 'five a day' target for fruit and veg

Amy Fallon

Most Britons are not eating the daily recommended amount of fruit or vegetables, and most adults are not eating enough fibre, research has found.

The Department of Health advises that people should eat at least five portions of fruit or vegetables a day to help reduce the risk of cancer, heart disease and other chronic conditions. But a study by the marketing group TNS found that only 12% of the population are adhering to the target, and another 12% eat no fruit and veg at all. TNS analysed the spending habits of

25,000 households and the nutrition labels of 100,000 food and drink products bought from supermarkets.

On average, TNS found, Britons are consuming just 2.5 daily portions of fruit and vegetables. Children and the less well-off are most likely to fail the target, with the more affluent and those aged over 45 more likely to meet the guidelines.

Giles Quick, managing director of TNS Worldpanel UK usage panels, said: "While the need for five a day seems to be common knowledge, the number of us who actually achieve this is shockingly low."

However, almost half the people questioned claimed to be trying to increase

their fruit intake, while almost two-fifths were aiming to eat more vegetables. There was some evidence, Quick said, that Britain was waking up to the importance of nutrition.

Indicating the huge obesity problem Britain is facing, the research – entitled Health of Britain, Perspective on Nutri-



On average people in the UK eat half the recommended portions of fruit and vegetables, though many are trying to eat more

tion 2008 – also found that larger clothing sizes are now more common. People aged under 25 made up 5% of the group wearing size 18 clothes and larger.

Separate research has found that most adults are failing to meet the government's recommended daily intake of 18gm of dietary fibre. A third of men and half of women are eating 12gm of fibre a day, the minimum amount, according to the British Dietetic Association.

The three main sources of non-starch polysaccharides, which made up more than three-quarters of fibre intake, were cereals, at 42%, fruit and vegetables, 20%, and potatoes and savoury snacks, 16%. TNS said that better news on eating

habits includes a decline of 11% in the eating of snacks over the past three years, after two decades of growth in that market. It now values the health food market at more than £11bn a year.

And last year, compared with 2006, the majority of households in the UK also bought less salt.

Parents are cracking down on children's poor eating habits. Only 27% of parents now buy their children what they want all the time – down from 41% in 2005 – and, compared with 2007, there are 8% more packed lunches being taken to school. These meals are likely to contain 32% more yoghurt, 25% more vegetables and 16% more fruit than a year ago.

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