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**K-State Nutrition PAGE — Practical Advice for Good Eating**

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Practical Advice for Good Eating

## Our Changing Food Portions

Many people remember the 1950's like they were yesterday. Others have to look at books, movies or classic television shows to get an idea of what life might have been like 45 or 50 years ago. Do you know how our diet in the 1950's compares to what is available today?

**More Food Available Now**  
Americans are provided with more food and more calories per person per day than they were 45 years ago, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Compared to the 1950's, there is more food in our national food supply now.

Maybe it is not surprising, then, that more adults and children living in the U.S. are now

overweight than ever before. And it seems to be getting worse, since dramatic increases in numbers of overweight people occurred during the 1990's, and continues.

Some of the changes in our food supply are described below.

**We eat out more often now.**  
We tend to eat more and to eat higher calorie foods when we eat away from home. The quality of our diet when eating away from home is worse than when we eat at home.

**Food portions have gotten bigger.** For instance, a medium sized order of theatre popcorn was

16 cups in 1997, but was only three cups 45 years ago. A bottle of soda used to be eight ounces, but now soda is served in single-service cups of up to 64 ounces!

**We drink more of our calories.** Drinking sweetened beverages, such as soft drinks and fruit drinks, is associated with higher calorie intakes. Research shows that we may not be able to rely on our appetite as well when it comes to refusing extra calories provided from sweetened beverages.

**More added sugar is in foods.** Our food supply contains three to six times the amount of sugar recommended by the Food Guide MyPyramid. In the 1950's, most of the sugar that we ate was added to foods at home. Lately, we have been consuming much more sugar, and most of it is added to our foods before we bring them home, by the companies who prepare the foods we buy.

**We have more added fats and oils** (in foods such as salad dressings, prepared bakery goods, fried foods, and high fat snacks), compared to what we ate in the 1950's.

**High calorie foods with low nutrition**, such as chips and cookies, give us many of our calories.

**We have more red meat, poultry and fish** available per person than we used to.

**We eat much more cheese**, mostly in the prepared food we buy at the grocery store and at restaurants.

**More fruits and vegetables** are available now at the grocery store than even just 15 years ago.

**We have more grain products** in our diet now compared to 25 to 45 years ago.

Do we eat less of anything these days? Yes, we eat fewer

eggs, fewer home-prepared foods, fewer high-fat meats, and we drink much less milk than we did 45 years ago.

### **Exercise has Decreased**

During the same time period that we have eaten more calories, our physical activity levels have gone down. Most Americans do not get enough (or any) regular physical activity. On the job, at many schools, and during our leisure time, physical exercise is often a thing of the past. Our lifestyle is much more sedentary now.

### **What Can You Do?**

Some practical solutions to this "problem" of an overabundance of food include simple actions that you can take every day.

- **Move around a lot.** Be physically active in any way that you can.
- **Eat only when you are hungry.**
- **Stop eating when you feel slightly full.**

• **Choose a variety of food groups**, but don't overdo the number of servings you choose from each of the food groups. If you eat too many foods, even in small portions, you can get too many calories.

• **Order smaller portions of foods** when eating foods away from home. Share a meal at a restaurant with a friend, take some food home and store it in the refrigerator for later use, or just leave it uneaten at the table. Even if a restaurant offers a lot of extra food for a little extra price, choose small portions and avoid eating too many calories.

• **Make smart food choices**, even when eating away from home--choose high nutrient, low calorie, low fat, low sugar foods most of the time.

Think about what you eat. Wise eating in the new century might reflect some of our healthier food practices from the fabulous 1950's.