

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CHALLENGE CHANGES EATING HABITS

Free media helps spread the message of improving diet for good health

Public Health Problem

- Less than 20% of Kentuckians eat even the minimum number of servings of fruits and vegetables recommended for good health.
- Diets low in fruits and vegetables are associated with greater risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer.
- People who eat a diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables are more likely to be at a healthy weight, an important step in controlling the obesity epidemic.

Program

- The Barren River District Health Department conducts an annual community wide “5 A Day Challenge” to get residents of the eight-county district in south central Kentucky to eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day.
- People are asked to eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables for seven days in a row, record their consumption on an entry form, and mail it to the health department by a specified date.
- Community partners donate a portion of the cash and other incentives used to motivate participant changes in eating habits.
- The Challenge is publicized using free media, a website, and through events in schools, worksites, and community settings. Contest publicity educates the public about the benefits of eating produce.

Impact

- Challenge participants reported eating more produce and trying new fruits and vegetables as a result of the contest.
- The personal impact of the campaign on one participant shows that the contest:
“...caused me to realize I was not eating as well as I used to and got me back on the path. Also, I notice when I eat so many fruits and vegetables (I was trying for 9 a day), I don’t have room for so much fattening food.”
- The health department raised ‘indirect’ dollars to disseminate this important public health message by providing local media with an interesting, human interest story broadcast to a large geographic area at no cost to the state.

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