

Different factors related to meat consumption

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Consumers' food choices reflect several factors, including income, demographics, prices and nutrition information. Data show a significant shift in the types of meat consumed since the 1970s, specifically a decrease in beef and veal consumption, relatively steady pork consumption and an increase in poultry consumption. The explanation for the shift is complex and includes factors affecting the demand for meat as well as factors impacting the supply of meat. Close examination of current meat consumption, differences among consumers, and consumer knowledge and attitudes about the role of meat in the diet can provide a dependable basis for developing food policies and for developing and targeting nutrition education and promotion programs.

A group of researchers from Iowa State University described the consumption of meats in the United States, mainly in relation to dietary recommendations found in the 1992 Food Guide Pyramid. They evaluated the degree to which consumers' knowledge and attitudes about nutrition, awareness of linkages between diet and health, and knowledge of nutritional qualities of meat influence meat consumption.

The study sample included 4,802 children and 9,460 adults from the 1994 to 1996 Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals (CSFII) and 5,649 adults from the Diet and Health Knowledge Survey. The CSFII provided information about two-day food intakes. The Diet and Health Knowledge Survey was administered at least one week after the last 24-hour recall. Meat subgroups (chicken, beef, pork, and processed pork products) were calculated from Food

Guide Pyramid meat groups by using recipe ingredients. Individuals in higher income households consumed relatively more chicken while those in low-income households consumed more processed pork products. Those consuming no beef and smaller amounts of chicken had the lowest discretionary fat intakes. Beef and pork consumers were more likely to think that their diets were too high in fat, but less likely to believe it is important to eat a low fat diet. The 1992 Food Guide Pyramid recommends 5 oz to 7 oz per day of foods in the meat, fish and alternates group for most Americans and smaller amounts for young children. The mean daily amount consumed by the total population, older than two years of age was 4.8 oz per day. Among adults, 5.1 oz were consumed per day. Region of residence affected the probability of consuming most meats. Having a high level of education was associated with a lower likelihood of consuming beef and pork.

Sociodemographic factors are strong predictors of the probability of choosing particular types of meat and of the amounts eaten. Knowledge and attitudes about diet and meat products also influence choices. The results of this study suggest that nutrition education efforts should focus on bringing consumers' food choices in line with their nutrition knowledge and should include efforts to help consumers understand and believe in the importance of personal food choices in determining health status. More specifically, consumers could benefit from learning how to choose and prepare the leaner types of beef and pork and how they can be incorporated into an overall healthful diet.

Patricia Guenther, Helen Jensen, Patricia Batres-Marquez, and Chun-Fu Chen. Sociodemographic, knowledge, and attitudinal factors related to meat consumption in the United States. *JADA*; 105:1266-1274 (August 2005)
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