



Intake of Calories and Selected Nutrients for the United States Population, 1999-2000

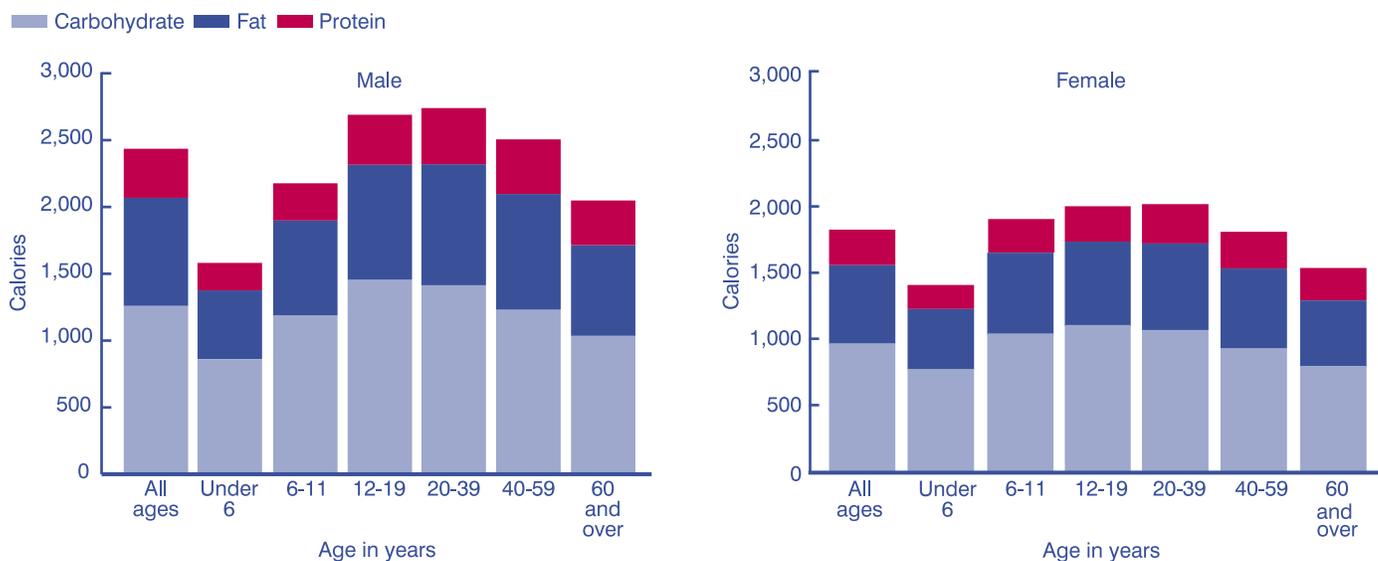
Why do we need estimates of dietary intake?

Estimates of dietary intake are an important part of monitoring the nutritional status of the U.S. population. Assessing dietary intake allows public health agencies and organizations to determine whether the population or subgroups within the population have inadequate intake or excess intake of specific nutrients. Knowing more about nutrient intake may be helpful in addressing the high prevalence of obesity and overweight in the United States as well as other nutrition-related problems. The energy we get from calories is provided by the nutrients protein, fat, and carbohydrate. [Figure 1](#) illustrates the patterns of intake of calories and of these three nutrients in the average diet of selected age groups in the U.S. population.

Dietary intake information from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey

The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) provides information on the health and nutritional status of the civilian, noninstitutionalized population of the United States residing in the 50 States and the District of Columbia. NHANES 1999-2000 included a 24-hour dietary recall interview to obtain information from participants on their intake of foods and beverages from the previous day. Using detailed databases of the nutrient composition of foods from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, estimates of nutrient intake were calculated for each participant.

Figure 1. Total calorie intake and major sources of calories for U.S. population, NHANES 1999–2000



How many calories are people in the U.S. consuming?

On average—

- Males consume 2,475 calories daily and females consume 1,833 calories.
- Males consume more calories than females within each age group (figure 1).
- Children consume fewer calories than adolescents or adults.

How much fat, protein, and carbohydrate is the U.S. population consuming?

On average—

- 33 percent of calories come from fat (figure 1) with little difference by age.
- About 15 percent of calories come from protein, ranging from 13 percent for children and adolescents to about 16 percent for older adults.
- About 52 percent of calories are from carbohydrate. In children and teens less than 19 years old, about 55 percent of calories are from carbohydrate compared with between 48-50 percent in adult men and 50-53 percent in adult women.

What about intake of saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium?

Researchers have identified intake of saturated fat and cholesterol as contributing to increases in blood cholesterol and risk for heart disease.

- On average, the daily intake of saturated fat in the United States is about 11 percent. In 2000, the U.S. Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee recommended that less than 10 percent of daily calorie intake be composed of saturated fat (figure 2). It is important to remember that even if the population average is close to a recommended level there still might be people in the population who consume more than that.
- The Dietary Guidelines recommendation for cholesterol intake is a limit of 300 milligrams (mg) per day (as shown on the Nutrition Facts food labels). On average, males consume 307 mg of dietary cholesterol per day and females consume 225 mg per day (figure 3). Cholesterol intakes are lower in young children.
- Average daily intake of sodium in the United States is 3,375 mg. The National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure recommends an upper limit of 2,400 mg of sodium per day. Sodium intake is higher for men than for women, and is lower in young children than older age groups (figure 4). The intake of many nutrients is related to overall calorie intake, for example, calorie intake is higher among males than females, and intake of sodium is also higher among males than females.

Figure 2. Saturated fat intake as percent of total calories for U.S. population, NHANES 1999–2000

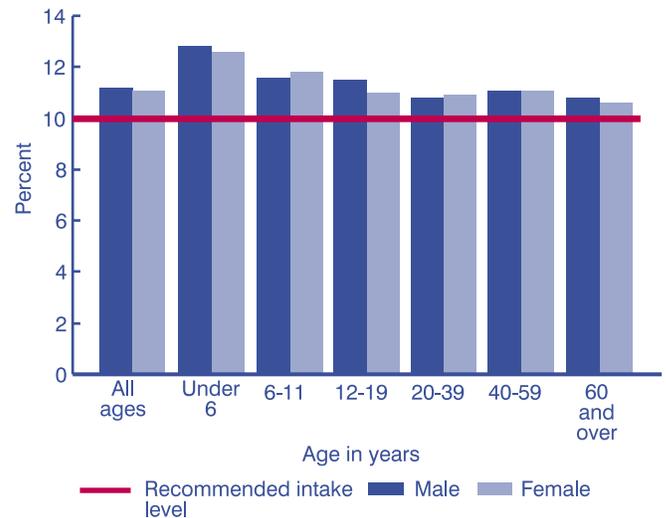


Figure 3. Dietary cholesterol intake for U.S. population, NHANES 1999–2000

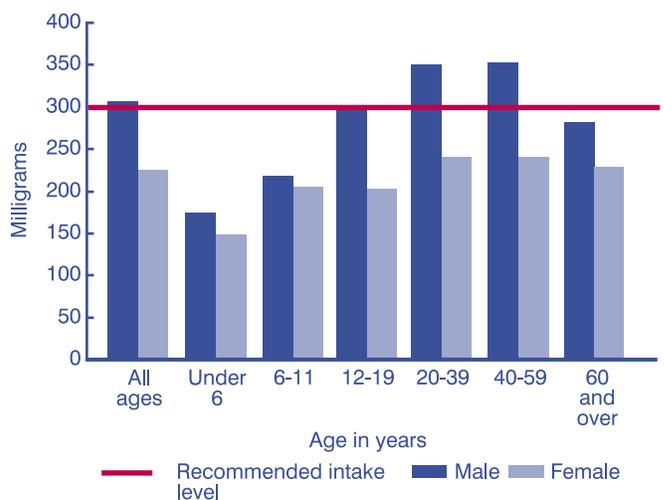
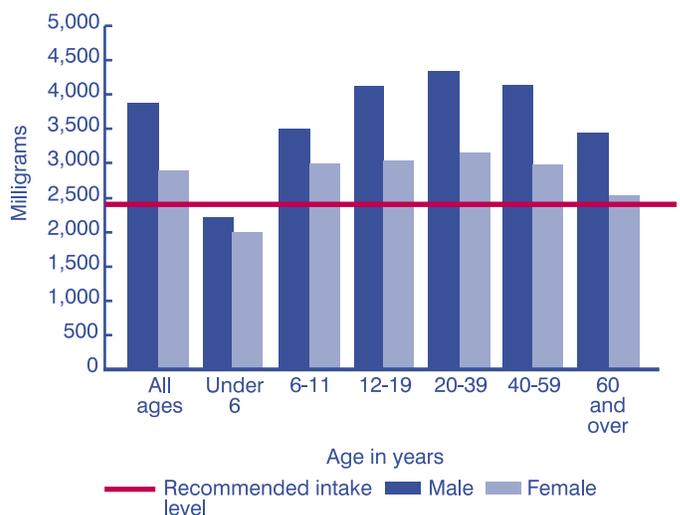


Figure 4. Dietary sodium intake for U.S. population, NHANES 1999–2000



For information about NHANES please visit our Web site:
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes>

A detailed table of estimates of intake for these nutrients and for other nutrients can be found in the publication “Dietary Intake of Ten Key Nutrients for Public Health, United States: 1999–2000” (Advance Data Report No. 334), which can be accessed at the following Web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/ad/ad334.pdf>