

Cost of Food at Home for a Week in Alaska

Quarter 1: March 2005

Up to three stores in each of 21 communities were surveyed during March of 2005 for the cost of a specific set of food and non-food items. The 104 food items selected were taken, with some modification, from the USDA Low-cost Food Plan which is itself based on a nationwide survey of eating habits of Americans, conducted in 1977-78. In addition, the costs of such items as water, propane and electricity were collected. All costs were adjusted to reflect local sales tax where applicable.

The estimated prices of unavailable food items in various communities were calculated as the expected cost as judged from the prices of all available items relative to the price of those items in Anchorage. The percent of foods unavailable in each community are shown in the survey.

Weekly food consumption rates for a family of 4, children 6 - 11 years, form the basis of the expressed food costs. All other costs are ratios of that cost as calculated from the USDA Cost of Food at Home survey issued March 2005. The cost for this family of 4 can be calculated from the table by summing the individual members. For smaller families such a sum would be too low and should be adjusted up by 20%, 10% or 5% for families of 1, 2 or 3 persons respectively. Similarly, the sum for larger families would be too high and downward adjustments of 5% and 10% are suggested for 6 and 7 or more member families. These adjustments reflect that some economies may be realized when preparing foods for larger families.

Rows 19 through 23 represent historical food costs. The Anchorage column is a comparison of present to previous Anchorage costs. Similarly the U.S. Average column represents changes in U.S. average prices. A one (1) appearing in the Anchorage column indicates that the current Anchorage cost is 1% higher now than at that date. Therefore, rising food costs are indicated by positive values. The remaining columns are each community's cost relative to Anchorage at that date. For instance, a cell containing a one (1) indicates a community that was experiencing a food cost 1% higher than Anchorage at that date.

Title: Physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle

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- A man's health can be judged by which he takes two at a time -- pills or stairs. -

Joan Welsh

- I like long walks, especially when they are taken by people who annoy me. - Fred A. Allen
- Whenever I feel like exercise I lie down until the feeling passes. - Robert M. Hutchins
- I'm not into working out. My philosophy: No pain, no gain. - Carol Leifer (<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/quotes/qthealth.htm>)

More than 60% of Americans do not get the recommended amount of physical exercise. It is broadly recognized that physical exercise is an essential component of a healthy lifestyle, which also includes a well-balanced nutrient-dense diet and avoidance of risky behaviors such as smoking. Indeed, physical exercise promotes good health even independently of other factors. For instance, regular physical exercise substantially reduces the risk for cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, obesity, colon cancer and high blood pressure. Exercise has been incorporated into the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005³. The key recommendations are:

- Engage in regular physical activity and reduce sedentary activities to promote health, psychological well-being, and a healthy body weight.
- To reduce the risk of chronic disease in adulthood: Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity, above usual activity, at work or home on most days of the week.
- For most people, greater health benefits can be obtained by engaging in physical activity of more vigorous intensity or longer duration.
- To help manage body weight and prevent gradual, unhealthy body weight gain in adulthood: Engage in approximately 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity activity on most days of the week while not exceeding caloric intake requirements.
- To sustain weight loss in adulthood: Participate in at least 60 to 90 minutes of daily moderate-intensity physical activity while not exceeding caloric intake requirements. Some people may need to consult with a healthcare provider before participating in this level of activity.
- Achieve physical fitness by including cardiovascular conditioning, stretching exercises for flexibility, and resistance exercises or calisthenics for muscle strength and endurance.

The current recommendations may seem daunting; however, there are simple options to integrate physical activity into your daily life. This is particularly important since, unlike hunger, there is no physiologic mechanism signaling the

body that insufficient physical activity has been performed. The CDC offers the following simple choices to increase daily physical activity:

- Walk, cycle, jog, skate, etc., to work, school, the store, or place of worship.
- Park the car farther away from your destination.
- Get on or off the bus several blocks away.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.
- Play with children or pets. Everybody wins. If you find it too difficult to be active after work, try it before work.
- Take fitness breaks-walking or doing desk exercises-instead of taking cigarette or coffee breaks.
- Perform gardening or home repair activities.
- Avoid labor-saving devices-turn off the self-propel option on your lawn mower or vacuum cleaner.
- Use leg power-take small trips on foot to get your body moving.
- Exercise while watching TV (for example, use hand weights, stationary bicycle/treadmill/stairclimber, or stretch).
- Dance to music.
- Keep a pair of comfortable walking or running shoes in your car and office. You'll be ready for activity wherever you go!
- Make a Saturday morning walk a group habit.
- Walk while doing errands.

Take the Talk test to assess the level of your exercise! At low levels of exercise you should be able to sing, at moderate levels you should be able to converse easily; and at vigorous levels talking should become difficult⁴.

Happy exercising, and, as Tom Robbins says: "To be or not to be isn't the question. The question is how to prolong being".

References:

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³<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/html/executivesummary.htm>.

⁴ http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/measuring/talk_test.htm

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