

The Proof is in the Pantry: Canned Foods are Associated with Healthier Eating Habits

Americans have long relied on canned foods as nutritious, convenient and affordable staples for preparing quick and flavorful home cooked meals. And, a variety of canned foods are a great source of potassium, dietary fiber, calcium and vitamin D – all identified as shortfall nutrients in the *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.¹



Helping to improve Americans' overall diet quality – a holistic view of nutrients consumed relative to calories consumed – is the focus of current dietary guidance, and essential considering Americans typically fail to meet government recommendations for vegetables, fruits and other nutrient-rich food groups.

To explore the link between canned food consumption and better diet quality, the Can Manufacturers Institute (CMI) commissioned research, including:

- An analysis of NPD Group's Nutrient Intake Database, which uses a 14-day food intake diary to track the eating habits of children and adults in 2,000 households annually, and
- A survey of more than 300 registered dietitians (RD) who make recommendations to their clients and make educated decisions about feeding themselves and their families.

Key Findings

Canned foods can be a hallmark of a healthier diet

Adults and children who frequently eat canned foods (six or more items over two weeks) have healthier eating habits compared to those who eat one-to-two canned food items in the same time period. This is indicated by:²

- Higher intakes of fruits and vegetables and 17 essential nutrients including calcium and fiber – two shortfall nutrients according to the *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*

- Greater likelihood of consuming, the food groups recommended in the *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (fruits, vegetables, dairy, protein and grains) as important to a balanced diet
- Stronger Healthy Eating Index (HEI) scores – a summary measure of 10 dietary components, including the five food categories from dietary guidelines, as well as saturated fat, total fat, sodium, cholesterol and amount of variety in diet. Higher scores correlate with better quality diets.³

Canned foods play a big role in helping RDs counsel their clients on ways to build healthy, balanced diets.

- 100 percent of RDs surveyed recommend at least one type of canned foods to clients who need to consume more fruits, vegetables, beans or fish in their diets.⁴



Frequent canned food users have higher intakes of fruits and vegetables and 17 essential nutrients



Canned Foods are Associated with Healthier Eating Habits

Key Findings

Value and convenience make healthy, homemade easy

RDs recognize the nutrition and value of canned foods not only for their clients, but also for themselves and their families.³

- 81 percent and 89 percent of RDs surveyed rate canned foods as important in helping themselves and their clients, respectively, prepare convenient, nutritious and affordable home cooked meals.
- 88 percent agree that the convenience of canned foods helps hectic home cooks get healthy, balanced meals on the table.

RDs believe canned fruits and vegetables provide equal or greater value, nutrition, convenience and taste, when compared to their fresh counterparts.³

- 77 percent of RDs surveyed agree that canned fruits and vegetables can be a better value than fresh because they maintain their nutritional content and are easy to store, as well as do not spoil (87% agree).
- Because they are usually canned hours after being picked at peak ripeness, a majority (58%) agree canned fruits and vegetables can be more nutritious than some fresh fruits and vegetables, and are just as good tasting (59%) as fresh varieties.
- 95 percent agree that different varieties of canned produce are great for providing year-round access to fruits and vegetables featured in healthy recipes.



89 percent of RDs surveyed rate canned foods as important in helping their clients prepare convenient, nutritious and affordable home cooked meals.



Nearly 80 percent of RDs surveyed agree that canned fruits and vegetables can be a better value than fresh because they maintain their nutritional content and are easy to store.

Canned foods are accessible, helping individuals of all income levels consume key vitamins and nutrients.²

Relative to infrequent consumers, frequent canned food consumers are twice as likely to be participants in the government assistance programs – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) – highlighting the important role canned foods play for individuals who have less access to fresh and frozen food varieties.



A well-stocked pantry – or Cantry™ – can help busy families prepare healthy meals more often.

Methodology Snapshot

Nutrition Intake Analysis

The CMI analysis of nutritional intake among frequent (six or more items over two weeks) and infrequent (one-to-two items over two weeks) canned food consumers utilized data from NPD Group's National Eating Trends (intake diary panel) and Nutrient Intake databases. The analysis was based on two years of data gathered between February 2011 and February 2013 with a nationally representative sample of 8,198 adults age 18+ and children aged 2 to 17, with 5,316 of participants being classified as frequent (2,584) or infrequent (2,732) canned food consumers.

Registered Dietitian (RD) Survey

The CMI survey of registered dietitians was completed among a national sample of 311 practicing registered dietitians currently holding positions where they provide nutrition and dietary guidance to their clients. Data was gathered between November 11 and November 19, 2013, via an online survey. The survey results have a margin of error of +/- 5 percent.

References

1. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. 7th Edition*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, December 2010.
2. The NPD Group's Food Impact Profile, Analyzing the Healthfulness of Canned Food Users' Diets, Can Manufacturers Institute, January 2014.
3. <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/HealthyEatingIndex.htm>
4. Survey of Registered Dietitians' Recommendation and Personal Consumption of Canned Foods. Can Manufacturers Institute, December 2013.