Youth’07
Nutritional Behaviours of Pacific Young People in New Zealand

• Healthy eating habits are important for maintaining a healthy weight and avoiding serious chronic diseases later in life.
• Although most Pacific students care about eating healthy food, many do not eat enough fruit and vegetables, and consume too much fast food and fizzy drinks.
• Unhealthy eating is higher among those from poorer areas, and therefore efforts to improve the eating habits of Pacific young people need to reflect the socio-economic circumstances of Pacific families.

This fact sheet presents key findings on the eating habits of Pacific young people living in New Zealand. The results are drawn from the Youth’07 national survey of secondary students in New Zealand, carried out in 2007. Youth’07 surveyed a large randomly-selected sample of secondary school students and the results given here are based on the 1,190 Pacific students among them – those who identified any of their ethnicities as Samoan, Cook Islands, Tongan, Niue, Tokelauan, Fijian, or Other Pacific Peoples.

Healthy eating
The survey showed that
• 78% of Pacific students said they cared about eating healthy food.

Proportions of Pacific and NZ European students who eat the recommended 5 servings of fruit and vegetables a day

What are healthy eating habits?
They include:

1. Eating more fruit and vegetables
The Ministry of Health recommends that young people eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables a day, however only 34% of Pacific students said they eat the recommended amount of fruit and vegetables.

2. Having less fast food and fizzy drinks
Foods purchased outside the home, especially fast food or takeaways, generally have a lot of energy (kilojoules or calories), a lot of saturated fat and/or sugar, and very little fruit or vegetables. Similarly, the fizzy drinks marketed to young people often contain excessive amounts of sugar and caffeine. For healthy nutrition it is recommended that young people limit their consumption of fast food and fizzy drinks, and eat their meals at home.
Pacific students ate fast food and drank fizzy drinks more often than NZ European students did:

- 31% of Pacific students had eaten fast food 4 times or more in the past week (compared to 8% of NZ European students).
- 47% of Pacific students had drunk fizzy drinks 4 or more times in the past week (compared to 27% of NZ European students).

Unhealthy eating is associated with poverty:
- Pacific students from poorer areas ate fast food and drank fizzy drinks more often than those from better-off areas.

### Pacific students’ poverty level and consumption of fast foods and fizzy drinks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poverty Level</th>
<th>Ate fast food 4 or more times in the last week</th>
<th>Consumed 4 or more fizzy drinks in the last week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poorer</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better off</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Pacific students from poorer areas were more likely to buy their lunch from shops or takeaways.

### Pacific students’ poverty level and buying lunch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poverty Level</th>
<th>Percent who bought lunch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poorer</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better off</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. Eating breakfast

Having breakfast is an important part of healthy eating. Many Pacific young people go without breakfast, or buy fast food for breakfast:

- 21% of Pacific students said they hardly ever eat breakfast (compared to 12% of NZ European students).
- 42% of Pacific students said they got their breakfast from shops or takeaways (compared to 8% of NZ European students).

### Breakfast eating habits of Pacific and European students

![Graph showing breakfast eating habits]

### 4. Regular meals

Not all Pacific students regularly eat lunch and dinner:

- 56% of Pacific students said they always have lunch
- 75% of Pacific students said they always have dinner.

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For more information go to:

www.youth2000.ac.nz

This fact sheet was prepared by S. Duffy, T. Teevale and J. Utter, The University of Auckland, with funding from the Health Research Council New Zealand.