

A SURVEY OF FIBRE CONSUMPTION BY VARIOUS AGE GROUPS IN
TWO AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITIES

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In 1975 Heywood commented on the paucity of information on fibre intake by Australians. This situation remains largely unchanged.

This paper reports a survey conducted by the 'History Method' of Burke (1947), modified to include a 24-h recall of food consumed prior to and after the 3-d food-diary record. Subjects were 23 females and 17 males in Geelong (population 15 000) and 47 females and 50 males in Armidale (population 22 000) and were grouped according to age (10-18, 19-25, 26-45, 46-65, > 65 years). The sample included children at boarding schools and university students.

Insoluble dietary fibre (IDF) of individual foods was by direct analysis (Angus, Sutherland and Farrell 1981) supplemented with data from Paul and Southgate (1978).

As there were no differences ($P > .05$) in daily IDF between the two communities, data were combined and are presented in Fig. 1.

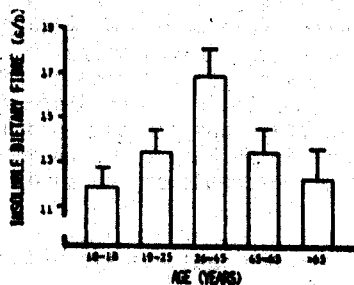


Fig. 1. Mean (T:SEM) intake of dietary fibre (g/hd/d) for different age groups

The age group 26-45 had the highest fibre intakes at 17 g/d. Students in boarding schools or in colleges consumed less fibre than students in a better position to make free choice, who had intakes approaching those of the 26-45 group. Mean daily intake of IDF, 13.7 g/d, was below that calculated from the data in the UK surveys of Southgate, Bingham and Robertson (1978) and Bingham, Cummings and Neil (1979) (17.7 g/d and 17.3 g/d respectively). The difference was largely accounted for in the intake of fibre from vegetables, which in all of the age groups was well below the UK figures.

Although there is considerable debate over what is an adequate fibre intake, the fact that 64 per cent of the sample surveyed had IDF intakes below 15 g/d may be cause for some concern.

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