

DIETARY ZINC INTAKE OF PRE-MENOPAUSAL WOMEN

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Assessment of the diets of 73 pre-menopausal women completing dietary frequency questionnaires suggested that 11% consumed a daily average of less than 50% of the recommended dietary allowance (RDA) of zinc. A further 26% of the women consumed less than 67% of the RDA, an amount considered to approximate the average daily requirement. Women with dietary intakes of less than 7.5 mg/day (50% of the RDA) tended to have lower zinc/energy and zinc/fibre ratios than women with higher zinc intakes. The women with low zinc intakes also obtained a greater proportion of their total zinc from cereal and vegetable sources than the other groups who consumed more zinc in the form of animal products. Dietary records from a second group of 18 working women (aged less than 35 y), covering periods from 6-76 days were also analysed. Of these, the zinc intakes of 8 women averaged less than 50% of the RDA. The apparent zinc intakes of all women showed large daily fluctuations, and periods of zinc impoverishment extending over several days were frequent. Recognising that without clinical data it cannot be said that any of these women were physiologically zinc-deficient, the data do suggest that a significant proportion of Australian women of child-bearing age may at times consume well below optimum zinc intakes, which could be exacerbated if other substances decreasing the bioavailability of zinc were present in the diet.

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