

NUTRITIONAL EVALUATION OF MEALS-ON-WHEELS (MOW) IN MELBOURNE:
DIETARY FIBRE

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The elderly are considered to be a group at risk of nutritionally-related health problems. Dietary fibre may play a role in the evolution of macrovascular disease, large bowel disease and diabetes. To evaluate the nutritional contribution of MOW to daily dietary intake, the dietary fibre content of composite meals collected from three Melbourne Metropolitan area was determined. Dietary fibre was determined using the enzymic method of Prosky et al. (1985). The dietary fibre content of composite meals was also assessed using the CSIRONET DIARYAN program based on British food composition tables with some Australian additions as described previously (Lo et al. 1985). The daily dietary fibre intake was assessed in recipients of the MOW services by a 3-day food record, and also by dietary history, with the same estimate of dietary fibre intake by both methods being found (Pargeter et al. 1986).

Dietary fibre content and intake from three Melbourne Metropolitan MOW services (Mean)

Services	n	MOW meal (g/meal)		Daily Intake (g/day)	% contribution of MOW meals to daily intake		% contribution of MOW meals to suggested intake (25-30 g/day)	
		A*	C*		A*	C*	A*	C*
1	15	7.7	6.9	16.0 (n=124)	48	43	26-31	23-28
2	15	5.6	4.7		35	29	19-22	16-19
3	15	8.5	7.6		53	48	28-34	25-30
Total	45	7.3	6.4		46	40	24-29	21-26

A* = Analysed C* = Calculated

The dietary fibre content of MOW meals in service 2 was relatively low because there were less vegetables in the meals. The percentage contribution of MOW to daily fibre intake was fair, but to suggested fibre intake low. There would appear to be scope for MOW services to provide more of the suggested daily dietary fibre intake in community-based elderly persons who depend on the services.

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