**Be better than 1.5 % !**

About five years ago I had the pleasure of hearing Dr. David Katz, MD, MPH, FACPM, FACP, FACLM speak during an Integrated Medical Convention sponsored by UC Health at the YMCA of the Rockies. Katz, is an internationally renowned authority on nutrition, weight control, and the prevention of chronic disease and he is also recognized internationally as an authority on evidence-based, integrative medicine.

One thing that has stuck with me since hearing his information is that only one and a half percent (1.5 %) of American’s reach the daily recommended servings of fruits and vegetables a day. That statistic really shocked me. I assumed that we as a nation were better than that! It was a surprising statistic to me, one which is very shocking and sad.

The Food Pyramid that so many of us are familiar and which has been updated and modified through the years, recommends that we eat at least two to three servings of vegetables and two to four servings of fruit every day. If you were to actually look at these serving sizes, you’d be surprised as how little the basic requirement is.

I started paying very close attention to what I was eating and what my kids were eating. Guess what? We were not eating the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables! I was not eating the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables! I wanted to bury my head in the sand!

Then I asked my friends and quickly discovered that most of my friends also were not meeting the recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables. Wow! Now we all must bury our heads in the sand.

The responses I got from those close to me were vast. One friend said that she never serves fresh vegetables because her kids would just throw them in the garbage. Another said that they don’t like them, and that she didn’t know how to make them taste good. Then another said that she is always throwing out rotten fruit.

Then I decided to hit Cosco on the way home from a trip to the airport and I literally bought every fruit and vegetable that they had available in their supersized containers. From the minute that I got home, we started eating our four to seven servings of fruits and vegetables. I immediately told my family that we would all try to not be part of the 98.5% of Americans that don’t eat their fruits and vegetables.

So, after being accused of “child abuse” by my daughter; “Mom, we eat more fruits and vegetables than any of my friends. We now have to eat more?” This was a true statement; however we weren’t eating consistently the recommended daily requirements. I decided to focus on doing better.

Well, it took a lot of work. I tried to have fresh fruit cleaned, prepped and available in the refrigerator or sitting on the kitchen counter. Simply cutting the watermelon ended in it being demolished within 24 hours. A bowl of cut up strawberries, blueberries and peaches ready to consume was refilled daily and left front and center in the refrigerator. I personally decided that I would eat grilled vegetable sandwiches for either lunch or dinner, and offered to share and make plenty for whoever was hungry.

The other thing I started purposely doing was recommending that the kids choose the fresh fruit as their snack. I would suggest adding tomatoes, lettuce and cucumbers to their sandwiches, then I just started to add it without asking. I started recommending fruit shakes as a snack. I made a point to suggest and prepare these fruit and vegetable options.

How did it go? It started off with a bang and found ourselves eating more than the required daily amount. It tapered into a new norm for us. In fact, it became so normal for us that my two oldest kids (who are in college) now eat more vegetarian based meals than any other.

It was a real eye opener for me and something we (as a family) had to work diligently at making happen. So my challenge to you, is to check your diet and see where do you fall within that 1.5 % statistic? Can you do better?