**5-A-Day Challenge**

Only 1 in 10 American adults get enough fruits and vegetables in their daily diet, according to a study published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Really? Only 1 person out of 10? That statistic really shocked me. I’m not sure what I was thinking or if I have ever thought about how many Americans actually get their recommended servings of fruits and vegetables a day. I assumed that it was more than that number. This is a surprising statistic to me, one which is very shocking and sad.

The Food Pyramid that so many of us are familiar with was changed and updated to “MyPyramid” in 2005, and then was updated to “MyPlate” in 2011and currently recommends that 50 percent of our daily nutrients are from vegetables and fruit.

“MyPlate” divides a dinner plate into four sections of 30 percent grains, 40 percent vegetables, 10 percent fruits and 20 percent protein. Off to the side, there is a small circle representing dairy.

There is also the “5-A-Day” international campaigns from countries around the world. It’s simple, eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Studies support that eating double this minimum provides even increased protection against all kinds of mortality.

So, 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!

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. The responses I got from those close to me were vast. One friend said that she never serves fresh vegetables because her kids would never eat them. 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.

Well! I decided to hit Cosco on the way home from a recent 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, I started eating my four to seven servings of fruits and vegetables. I immediately told my family that we would all try to not be part of the 90 percent of Americans that don’t eat their fruits and vegetables.v 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 probably a true statement; however, we weren’t eating consistently the recommended daily requirements. I decided to focus on doing better.

How? Well, it took a lot of work. I’ve 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 more vegetables for either lunch or dinner and offered to share and make plenty for whoever was hungry. We started grilling vegetables and not serving rice or potatoes.

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 and then just added without asking. I started recommending fruit shakes as a snack. I suggested that they help prepare these fruit and vegetable options with me. That was probably the child abuse!

As a young family it was a process, some days better than others, however overall, we learned a lot and were able to direct our eating towards a healthier plate. As a family my kids grew into making awesome choices. As adults, they now, truly eat well-balanced plates.

This was been a real eye opener for me and as it should be for everyone. Ten percent, where do you fall in that statistic? Now, go and eat your vegetables!