

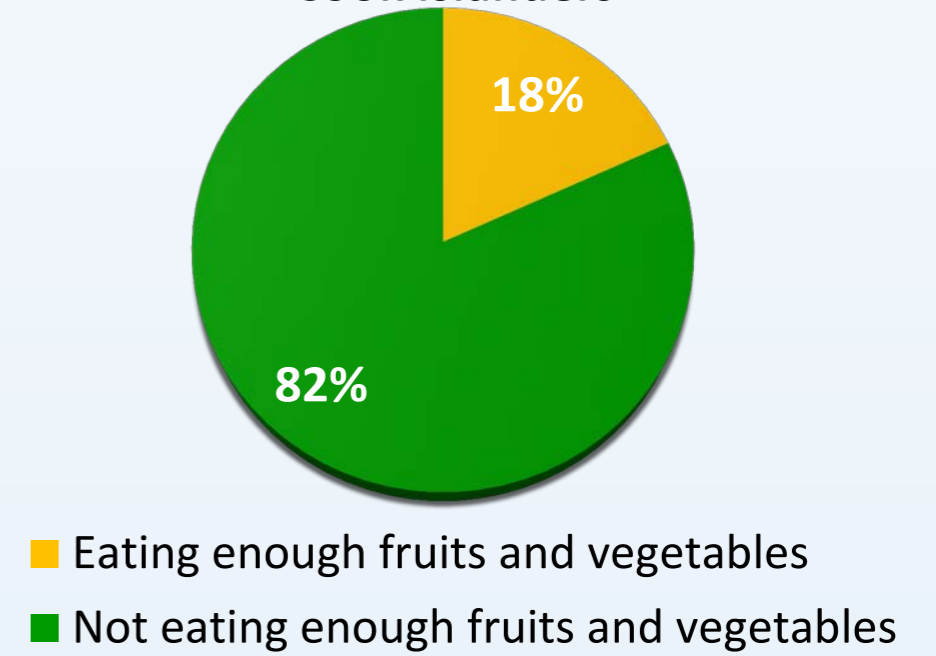
### Research Question

How is an unhealthy diet related to type 2 diabetes?

### Why is type 2 diabetes an issue for the Cook Islands?

- Cook Islands has a high rate of diabetes – 26% of Cook Islanders have diabetes.
- Cook Islands is rated one of the top 5 countries in the Pacific Islands with high risk of diabetes.
- Unhealthy diet is one of the top risk factors for diabetes.
- 82% of Cook Island adults do not get the recommended 3 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruit every day.
- Diabetes can become a major health and economic problem in the Cook Islands if we continue to have high prevalence of risk factors, such as low consumption of fruit and vegetables, high cholesterol, etc.

Fruit & Vegetable Consumption of Adult Cook Islanders



### What is type 2 diabetes?

- Type 2 diabetes is a disease where there is too much sugar (glucose) in the blood.
- This can be because the pancreas is not making enough insulin or the body has become resistant to insulin (it makes insulin but cannot use it).

#### Symptoms:

- Constant hunger and thirst, blurred vision, erectile dysfunction, increased urination and slower healing of wounds.

#### Impact:

- Leads to life threatening conditions: blindness, stroke, heart attack, gangrene and amputations.



### Unhealthy diet and type 2 diabetes. What's the connection?



- Eating enough fruits and vegetables is one indicator of a healthy diet.
- 18.2% of Cook Islanders eat 5 or more serves of fruit and vegetables a day – that eat a healthy diet.
- Junk foods include foods such as fizzy drinks, burgers, chips.
- These foods are high in sugar, fat, salt and calories. Eating too much & not doing enough exercise can cause overweight – a known risk factor for diabetes.
- Eating healthy is challenging because of social, cultural and environmental influences.
- Availability and affordability of healthy foods is also another challenge.

### References:

- Cook Islands Ministry of Health brochure: What is Diabetes?
- Can Poor Diet cause diabetes: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/445709-can-poor-diet-cause-diabetes/>.
- Mr Martin, Year 11 Science Teacher.
- Junk food and Diabetes: <http://www.healthline.com/health/type2-diabetes/junk-food#1>.
- Cook Islands Ministry of Health Cook Islands NCD STEPs Risk Factor Report.

### My Recommended Actions

I recommend that:

- The Ministry of Health plan a strategy to encourage Cook Islanders to eat our local food.
- Government should look for ways to import healthy foods.
- Government should look at ways of reducing the number of vehicles and encourage people to use bicycles and walking to their destination.
- Parents should encourage good eating habits in the homes.
- More information on type 2 diabetes and unhealthy diet and NCDs should be delivered in all schools.
- These messages should also be encouraged through religious organisations and workplaces (public and private).
- Ministry of Education should enforce existing healthy lunch policies throughout schools in the Cook Islands.