

SCIENCE & EDUCATION Impact

Benefits from USDA/Land-Grant Partnership

Healthy Habits

Exercising and eating nutritiously for better health.

The health of Americans is being compromised as poor nutrition and a lack of exercise increase diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol and heart disease. The Centers for Disease Control found that 65 percent of Americans are overweight or obese, with 14 percent of children ages 12 to 19 overweight or obese. Health officials say the problem continues to worsen. The USDA and Land-Grant universities are partnering to promote healthy lifestyle changes to reduce obesity, address health disparities and develop research-based solutions.

Payoff

- **The fight against fat.** Arizona's Healthy Weight for Life Program helped 150 women lose an average of 40 pounds by eating well, exercising and developing healthy interpersonal relationships. "I lost 44 pounds, and now I am able to wear clothes I haven't worn in years," a participant said. More than 70 percent of the 150 women have maintained their weight or continued to lose pounds. Louisiana State's Portions Healthy Weight Program encouraged participants to start an exercise regimen. Participants lost an average of 4 to 8 pounds in nine weeks. Of the 700 participants, 90 percent reported reducing their cholesterol, blood pressure or blood sugar levels.
- **Fitness walk.** To take off extra pounds and encourage physical activity, Kansas State got 7,000 people involved in Walk Kansas. They completed 432 miles by walking, jogging, biking, swimming or dancing. With 59 percent of the Idaho residents overweight, Idaho partnered with Montana State and Wyoming to educate adults and youths about healthy eating habits. During the Preston on the Move walking program, 263 community residents achieved healthier eating habits while each taking 10,000 steps. Mississippi ranks among the most obese states, so Mississippi State conducted the Weight Off Wisely program to help people lose weight with exercise. People from three counties lost a total of 600 pounds and in eight weeks lowered their cholesterol and blood pressure, which reduced their risk for heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

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- **Baby fat.** **Missouri** taught the Show-Me Nutrition curriculum to 14,000 students at risk for obesity. Thanks to this program, 53 percent made healthier food and beverage choices in the school cafeteria. **Connecticut** researchers examined the nutritional needs of children when routine exercise is coupled with growth. This work will help develop improved weight loss and nutrient guidelines for kids in regular exercise programs.
- **Help for hypertension.** Project HOPE – Hypertension Outreach Prevention Education – developed at Texas’ **Prairie View A&M**, teaches minorities to manage their high blood pressure. More than 2,000 people in three counties have adopted healthy cooking habits to control and prevent hypertension. An ideal healthy lifestyle includes a balanced diet and exercise.
- **Passing the taste test.** **West Virginia’s** Dining with Diabetes program teaches people with diabetes and their families to make healthy foods tasty and improve their eating habits. Participants learn about easy recipes, basic nutrition, appropriate portion sizes and healthy food choices. Of the more than 1,200 people completing the class, 70 percent increased their ability to manage diabetes and improved their eating habits. People with diabetes who take The Kitchen Creations class at **New Mexico State** are learning to plan healthier meals, eat fewer carbohydrates and eat more vegetables. About 60 percent of participants increased their use of food planning tools, and 50 percent are eating healthier. **Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute** partnered with tribal leaders and Head Start staff to provide classes on nutrition, diabetes, cooking healthy and diet and exercise. Of the families in the tribal communities, 35 percent are below the poverty level and don’t have access to health, educational and family development resources. Tribal community resource centers were opened at 26 Head Start/Early Childcare Centers in New Mexico and Colorado, and the staff produced a video and CD-ROM, “Native Americans and Diabetes.”
- **Nutrition cents.** Nutrition educators are teaching families to save money and improve their health with assistance from the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program. **Wyoming’s** Cent\$ible Nutrition Program has people eating foods low in fat and sugar, exercising, lowering their blood pressure and reducing their grocery bills. More than 17,000 people have changed their attitudes toward health. One participant reduced her monthly grocery bill from \$350 to \$142. Another lowered her cholesterol and was able to get off her medication. Limited-resource families in **Oregon State’s** nutrition program learn budgeting, menu planning, product labeling and comparison shopping to eat healthier and get the most for their money. More than 60 percent of the people who complete the program say they read nutrition facts labels to make healthier choices, and 44 percent have enough food for the month. Extension expects to save Oregon more than \$3.60 in future health costs for every \$1 invested to improve nutrition behaviors. **New Mexico State, Alabama, Delaware, Virginia, Tennessee** and other Land-Grant universities offer similar programs. Improving the eating habits of Hispanic families is the focus of the **Georgia** Food and Nutrition Program in Spanish. It has served 5,000 seniors and adults, who are healthier because they eat right, control their weight, have fewer sick days and exercise to lose weight.



**Cooperative State Research, Education,
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