

Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program

An investment in Wisconsin



Wisconsin is strong when families are healthy and food secure

The evidence is clear—a poor diet and lack of physical activity contribute to poor health. In Wisconsin in 2012, 47% of all deaths were due to heart disease, cancer and diseases clearly linked to diet.

Data from 2009 show that only 23% of Wisconsin adults eat the recommended servings of fruit and vegetables, while only 77% report engaging in any type of leisure-time physical activity. Low-income families are particularly susceptible, with inadequate diets and less knowledge about nutrition recommendations than families with more financial resources.

Nutrition education is an investment in Wisconsin

In addition to the toll on individual health, the staggering and growing rates of obesity are a financial burden to all. A national study by the USDA found that educational interventions to encourage Americans to improve their diets may prevent tens of thousands of cases of heart disease and save between \$4 billion and \$12 billion in health care expenditures and lost earnings over 10 years.

Our response

The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program, an important part of Cooperative Extension programming, is primarily funded by approximately 9 million dollars in funds from the SNAP program within the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture SNAP-Ed. Federal funds are used to employ over 150 county-based nutrition educators in 68 counties throughout the state. During the recent year 2013-2014 these nutrition educators reached nearly 122,000 learners for a total of 312,500 educational contacts. Nearly one in five of the learners were people of color.



Our outcomes

We teach school-age youth to make healthy food choices.

- In 2014, 40 counties provided place-based nutrition education to youth in schools, libraries, public health clinics, neighborhood centers, summer feeding sites, Community Action agencies and community gardens.

We teach children and adults about the need to eat fruits and vegetables.

- Our lessons impact food choices. After a lesson on fruits and vegetables, 16,506 children were offered a fruit or vegetable sample; 96% tried the sample and 72% said they would eat the food again.
- After children completed nutrition education lessons, 59% of 1586 parents surveyed said their children were more willing to taste new foods; 50% said the children were eating more fruit; and 39% said the children were eating more vegetables.
- Over 1300 adults participated in lessons about fruits and vegetables. After the lessons 81% of the adults said they were going to try to eat more vegetables.

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We teach parents how their families can plan healthier meals.

- Educators reached 15,000 parents of infants or young children at a variety of statewide locations.
- 635 parents participated in planning healthy meals. After the lessons 86% of the participants said they were going to plan meals more often as a result of what they learned.
- We teach at Women, Infants and Children (WIC) clinics, food pantries, and senior meal programs.
- Our lessons help families eat healthy foods on low incomes. We reached 10,595 individuals at WIC clinics last year, teaching learners how to stretch their food dollars and use food available through WIC.

- After participating in lessons at WIC clinics about how to prepare foods they obtained through WIC (such as dry beans, cereals and juice), 742 learners (88%) said they had learned something to make it easier to use these foods in family meals and snacks.
- After lessons about the importance of eating whole grains, 86% of 964 learners at food pantries and senior meal programs reported they would eat whole grains more often.

The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program—good for the health and well-being of Wisconsin's families and communities, and a sound investment in our state.

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