

Poor Nutrition and Health Concerns in Low-Income Population

- An estimated one out of every seven Texans (15.4%) experience food insecurity - a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle - compared to the national average of one in eight people (12.9%).
- Poor diet quality has been linked to four of the 10 leading causes of death, including heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes.
- In Texas, 33% of the adult population is obese and 33% of youth (10-17 years old) are either overweight or obese. Obesity increases the risk for diabetes, hypertension and poor overall quality of life.

AgriLife Extension's Response

- The Better Living for Texans (BLT) program was initiated in 1995 as a cooperative endeavor of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).
- Funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the BLT program works with low-income individuals and families—particularly SNAP recipients and applicants as well as those eligible to receive SNAP benefits—to help them learn how to prepare nutritious meals and stretch their food resources through practices such as comparing food prices, planning meals in advance, and shopping with a list.
- BLT also delivers educational programs to help participants improve their food safety behaviors and adopt the habit of regular physical activity.
- Depending on audience needs, educational programs are delivered through a variety of teaching methods, including lesson series, single-concept classes, demonstrations, and tours. In 2017, BLT conducted 9,696 education

sessions, resulting in more than 739,000 educational and other contacts with the target audience.

- In 2017, 600 participants in 12 counties across the state were taught basic gardening skills, and how to build and maintain community gardens with the goal of increasing participants' access to fresh produce. Evaluations from program participants found that gardening education and access to community gardens helped to increase the availability and accessibility to vegetables and fruits.

Program Impacts

- Using their new gardening knowledge and skills, participants produced over 5,700 pounds of fruits and vegetables in community gardens in 2017.
- Evaluation results showed that the percentage of participants who regularly filled at least one-half of their plate with vegetables and/or fruit rose from 37% before participating in the program to 71% one month after the program.
- With a goal of stretching their monthly food budget, planning meals in advance increased from 36% before the program to 70% a month after the program series, while the percentage of participants using a grocery list when shopping rose from 48% to 79%. Additionally, the percentage of participants comparing prices when shopping increased from 45% to 82%.
- The primary benefit of the program is increasing fruit and vegetable intake. Participants' consumption of fruits two or more times per day increased from 21% to 44%, and the same measure for vegetables increased from 24% to 48%.
- With the goal of increasing physical activity and improving food safety practices in the home among senior adults, the frequency of being physically active for 30 minutes or more increased from 3.2 days per week to 4.2 days per week at the end of the program.

Extending Knowledge | Providing Solutions

AgriLifeExtension.tamu.edu/impacts

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is an equal opportunity employer and program provider. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating

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