



Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program

Public health officials continue to sound the alarm about America's mounting obesity epidemic. Recent studies have found that nearly two-thirds of U.S. adults are overweight or obese, and both children and adults are consuming significantly more calories today than they did just 30 years ago.

The personal costs of this epidemic include reduced longevity due to increases in heart disease, hypertension, stroke, some types of cancer, and diabetes. The societal costs are immense: annual obesity-attributable medical expenditures in the United States are now estimated at \$125 billion (or more).

EFNEP: A Proven Solution

Among the best tools yet developed to fight obesity is the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) funded by the USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service and managed by America's land-grant universities. In nearly 800 counties in all 50 states and the U.S. territories, EFNEP combats obesity by helping low-income individuals gain the skills and motivation they need to improve their diets and be more physically active.

Also, studies show that people who run out of food or miss meals because they cannot afford them are among the most obese. EFNEP reaches these "high-risk" individuals through tried and true lessons and activities taught in peer-to-peer fashion by paraprofessionals and volunteers recruited from their neighborhoods.

In FY 2005, 562,844 individuals (73 percent youth) participated in the EFNEP program, learning how to prepare healthy meals for their families, stretch their food budgets, and find ways to be more active.



EFNEP graduates in FY 2005 made measurable progress:

- 93%** Improved their dietary intake, including an increase of about 1.6 servings per day of fruits and vegetables.
- 89%** Increased nutrition practices such as making healthful food choices and reading nutrition labels.
- 84%** Bettered their food resource management practices such as meal planning and shopping with a list.
- 67%** Improved food safety practices such as storing and thawing food properly.

The results for EFNEP's youth participants are also impressive:

- 73%** Now eat a variety of foods.
- 70%** Increased their knowledge of the essentials of human nutrition.
- 65%** Increased their ability to select low-cost nutritious foods.
- 65%** Improved practices in food preparation and safety.

A Solid Return on Investment

Cost-benefit studies have shown that for every dollar invested in EFNEP, health care costs can be expected to decline by: \$10.64 in Virginia; \$8.82 in a group of Midwestern states; \$8.03 in Iowa; and \$3.63 in Oregon. Universally, every state showed a positive benefit for participants.

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