

Community Nutrition

Increasing nutritious and culturally appropriate foods and beverages that are affordable and accessible to all.

Healthy Beverages



Healthy Foods



Healthy Foods

Overview

Healthy Foods is a component of the Healthy Living Community Nutrition Program. It is a community-driven approach committed to reducing barriers to good nutrition, while building a more equitable food system so everyone in Minneapolis can have access to healthier food choices.

Changing environments to make nutritious foods more accessible

There is a strong relationship between the food we eat and our health. Poor nutrition and an unhealthy diet are leading risk factors for various chronic health conditions, including heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, cancer, obesity, and other diet-related diseases.

Personal eating habits and choices play an important role in nutrition and health outcomes. Yet, many people in Minneapolis, particularly those living in low-income neighborhoods, have limited access to healthy foods. By not having healthy food options, people must overcome obstacles to get healthy foods, or settle for high-calorie, low-nutrient foods.

Disparities in accessing healthy food may deprive people of a balanced diet, leading to alarming health outcomes among the most vulnerable communities.

The HLI recognizes that everyone, regardless of race, education, income, gender, sexual orientation, or ability, should have easy access to a wide variety of nutritious and culturally appropriate foods.

Our collaborative efforts focus on implementing effective, sustainable solutions to increase access and availability of affordable, high quality, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food to improve the health of all people in Minneapolis.



Our current focus

To reduce health disparities and improve the health of the most vulnerable communities in Minneapolis, the Community Nutrition program focuses on:

Increasing the availability, affordability, and accessibility of high quality, culturally appropriate, nutritious foods for everyone.

Providing resources for community members to gain the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to select, prepare, and consume nutritious meals.

Collaboration and partnerships

Since 2008, The Healthy Living Initiative (HLI) has collaborated with organizations and community leaders to better understand the community's nutrition-related needs and to identify opportunities to improve access to healthy foods.

The HLI has developed strong partnerships with a variety of entities, including schools, worksites, public housing properties, clinics, hospitals, and community-based organizations, to tackle this complex issue.

By cultivating these partnerships and working together, we become agents of change. For example:

- To increase availability of healthy food in low-income neighborhoods without easy access to full-service grocery stores, the HLI teamed up with BrightSide Produce, a non-profit produce distribution company. Through the Healthy Corner Stores program, BrightSide made weekly deliveries of fresh fruits and vegetables to more than 30 corner stores across Minneapolis.



- The HLI is collaborating with the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority and Volunteers of America to increase access to nutritious foods for low-income adults and families living in subsidized housing. Partners including the Twin Cities Mobile Market and Eastside Neighborhood Services are launching new services, such as free fruit and veggie giveaways, mobile food shelves, and low-cost grocery services, to bring healthy foods directly to residents.



- The HLI is supporting the Division of Indian Work, Native American Community Clinic, and Indian Health Board to develop breastfeeding-friendly policies and create welcoming lactation spaces. These improvements are making it easier for people in the Native community to breastfeed while at work or away from home.



Driving sustainable changes together

Making healthy food choices practical and easily available to all community members requires a combination of community-level solutions along with individual nutrition education and skill-building

For example, the Community Nutrition program supports:

- Policy changes: Adopting nutrition standards that prioritize healthy foods at food shelves, worksites, hospitals, and retail settings.
- Systems changes: Fostering sustainable partnerships between food providers and low-income housing properties to increase access to fresh produce and nutritious staples.
- Environmental changes: Changing physical spaces at food shelves to highlight nutritious options, and creating lactation spaces to support breastfeeding at worksites.

Success story - Making a difference together: Produce Rx Pilot

For many Native American residents in Minneapolis, eating a healthy diet can be difficult due to historical, structural, and systemic barriers that limit access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods.

Native American Community Clinic (NACC) provides crucial healthcare services for many individuals with chronic conditions such as heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes: individuals for whom increased access to fresh fruits and vegetables is critical for managing their conditions.

In July 2022, the HLI partnered with NACC and BrightSide Produce to support the launch of a Produce Rx Pilot. The pilot would address food insecurity among NACC's patients by increasing access to, and consumption of, fresh fruits and vegetables to help patients manage or prevent chronic conditions.



Through this pilot, NACC patients were screened for food insecurity. If they screened positive, they were offered home-delivery of fresh produce through BrightSide Produce. The home-delivery model removed barriers to healthy food access such as transportation and lack of time. By September 2023, 55 patients participated in the Produce Rx pilot and received bi-weekly deliveries of fresh produce.

With future funding, the HLI plans to expand Produce Rx to more healthcare settings in Minneapolis.

People can't make healthy food decisions if healthy options aren't available to them.

As of 2019, Minnesota's adult obesity rate was 30.1% up from 28.4% the previous year.¹



In 2021, 1 in 15 Minnesota neighbors were food insecure with dramatically higher rates of food insecurity for people of color: 25% of Black people and 17% of Hispanic people in Minnesota were food insecure in 2020. For White people, the rate was 5%.²

1 in 15 people face hunger.



1 in 11 children face hunger.



Minnesotans made over 5 million visits to food shelves in 2022, a record high. This is nearly 2 million more visits than in 2021 and 1.7 million more than the previous record set in 2020.³

Improving access to healthy and affordable foods can help prevent chronic health conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.

The benefits of healthy nutrition



May help you live longer



Supports healthy pregnancies



Builds muscle & strong bones



Lowers the risk of heart disease



Supports healthy breastfeeding



Helps support healthy body weight



Supports mental health



Boosts your immune system



Keeps your digestive system healthy



Delivers more nutrients to your body



Reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes



Helps keep your skin, teeth and eyes healthy

... helps people live longer healthier lives.

Sources

1. Perry, S. (2019, September 12). *Minnesota's Adult Obesity Rate is 30.1%, up From 28.4%* [Independent Journalism]. MINNPOST. <https://www.minnpost.com/second-opinion/2019/09/minnesotas-adult-obesity-rate-is-30-1-up-from-28-4/>
2. *Food Insecurity Among Overall (all ages) Population in Minnesota*. (n.d.). [Map the Meal Gap Research]. Feeding America. <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/overall/minnesota>
3. *Food Shelf Visits, 2022* (p. 3). (2022). [MN Food Shelf Visits 2022]. Hunger Solutions. <https://www.hungersolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Food-Shelf-Visits-2022-2-7-23-FINAL.pdf>

Going forward

Good nutrition is at the core of good health. Making it easy for people to make healthy food choices should be the result of coordinated community efforts that support an improved food environment. The HLI and its partners will continue working together at the intersection of health, justice, and equity to reduce systemic barriers and increase access to culturally relevant and healthy foods.



Be a part of our focus in identifying and promoting opportunities that create a healthy, vibrant, equitable, and sustainable food system for all Minneapolis residents.

Everyone is welcome to attend public meetings of the Homegrown Minneapolis Food Council – the City’s advisory group that engages diverse stakeholders to improve the local food system. For information about meeting times and locations, visit: <https://bit.ly/3RWIMF6>

For more information contact:

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We invite you to join us in our efforts
to create healthier communities
together in Minneapolis.



Building Healthier
Communities



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