

4-H Healthy Living: Nutrition

Mission of 4-H:

A world in which youth and adults learn, grow and work together as catalysts for positive change.

The Challenge:

Weight gain and obesity among young people is alarming. Poor eating patterns established in childhood can transfer to adulthood. Studies show that about one-third of children and youth are overweight, with half of them being obese. As a result, nutrition-related diseases that were once considered adult illnesses are increasingly being diagnosed in children. Young people are not eating enough whole fruit, whole grains, legumes, and dark green and orange vegetables. Children need to eat less saturated fats and added sugars. Awareness of dietary quality, access to healthy foods, and making smart food choices are necessary to improve the nutritional health of youth and their families.

The Solution:

Through 4-H Healthy Living strategies and programming, youth will...

- Know how to choose food according to dietary guidelines.
- Have a more positive attitude toward helpful foods and/or are willing to try new foods, and they will set goals to improve their dietary and food resources management practices.
- Have the awareness, knowledge, and skills to handle food/kitchen tools safely and follow recipes correctly.
- Eat foods that are closer to the recommended daily amounts.
- Eat more meals with family.
- Prepare simple, nutritious, and affordable food.
- Reduce the proportion of the youth who are overweight or obese.
- Maintain healthy eating habits and decrease health-related problems.

The Partnerships – The following examples show how partnerships contribute to the work of 4-H Healthy Living goals:

- **Share Our Strength:** Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign works to end child hunger in America by connecting kids to effective nutrition programs like school breakfast and summer meals.
- **Food and Nutrition Service (FNS):** FNS works to end hunger and obesity through 15 federal nutrition assistance programs, including Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); and school meals.

The Results:

- With support from the Walmart Foundation, the [4-H Youth Voice: Youth Choice](#) program has reached nearly 75,000 at-risk youth and their families with interactive education about nutrition. About 90 percent of elementary school-aged participants reported learning how to make healthy food choice, while 87 percent now drink more water and 83 percent now eat more fruits and vegetables. Of the high school-aged participants, 87 percent report understanding why it's important to eat a healthy diet, while 80 percent now drink more water and eat more fruit and vegetables.
- A [4-H Healthy Event/Club Assessment](#) was created to provide those planning events and activities with simple tips to improve participants' health along with an easy tracking system to see how they have improved the positive health options during activities over time.

The 4-H Youth Development Program is the youth outreach program from the land-grant institutions' Cooperative Extension Services, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). 4-H serves as a model program for the practice of positive youth development. 4-H National Headquarters is housed within the Division of Youth and 4-H at USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Additional support for 4-H programming is provided through National 4-H Council. For more information email 4Hhq@nifa.usda.gov.