



Characteristics of Food Stamp households, 2001

On average, about 17.3 million people living in 7.5 million households received food stamps in the United States each month in FY 2001. Food stamp households are a diverse group. Because food stamps are available to most low-income households with few resources, regardless of age, disability status, or family structure, recipients represent a broad cross-section of the nation's poor.

Most food stamp recipients are children or elderly. Over half (51%) are children and another 10% are age 60 or older. Working-age women represent 28% of recipients, while working-age men represent 12%.

The majority of food stamp households do not receive cash welfare benefits. Less than one quarter (23%) received TANF benefits. Nearly a third (32%) received Supplemental Security Income. One quarter received Social Security benefits. Nine percent had no cash

income of any kind.

Many food stamp recipients work. Over one fourth (27%) of food stamp households have earnings. For these households, earnings are the primary source of income.



Food stamp households have little income. Only 11% are above the poverty line, while 34% have incomes at or below half the poverty line. The typical food stamp household had gross income of \$624 per month and received a monthly food stamp benefit of \$163. Over one-fifth of monthly funds (cash income plus food stamps) available to a typical household came from food stamps.

Food stamp households possess few resources. The average food stamp household possesses only about \$148 in countable resources (including the non-excluded portion of vehicles and the entire value of checking and savings accounts and other savings). Over two-thirds (68%) have no countable resources.

Most food stamp households are small. The average food stamp household size was 2.3, but varied considerably by household composition. Households with children were relatively large, averaging 3.4 members. Households with elderly members were smaller, with an average size of 1.3 people.

USDA's comprehensive report on food stamp households can be found at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/menu/published/fsp/participation.htm>

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Health vs. fitness: working up a sweat?

Many of us remember being told that we needed to "work up a sweat" in order to get any benefit from exercise. Now organizations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to the American College of Sports Medicine say the goal is to engage in *moderate* intensity physical activity. *Moderate* refers to walking at

a brisk, but not necessarily sweat-producing, pace of 3-4 miles per hour, for example.

Why the switch? New research, and a new look at old research, has shown that while endurance exercise certainly produces health benefits, moderate intensity physical activity actually produces many of

the same health benefits. Study after study shows that people who walk, as well as those who run, are less likely to have heart attacks, high blood sugar and diabetes, and other chronic diseases.

What determines the health benefits people get from
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Healthy Schools Summit

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On October 7 and 8 of 2002, over 500 participants from more than 35 national education, health, nutrition and fitness organizations came together at the Healthy Schools Summit in Washington DC, chaired by former US Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher and spearheaded by the National Dairy Council. The agenda focused on the Surgeon General's *Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*, which became the basis for the Summit's "Commitment to Change."

The underlying premise of the Healthy Schools Summit is that all schools in America should provide a healthy environment where children learn and participate in positive dietary and lifestyle behaviors and practices. By facilitating learning through the support and promotion of good nutrition and physical activity, schools contribute to the basic health status of children, thereby optimizing their performance potential, and ensuring that no child is left behind. The agenda and presentations can be found at <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/hss/finalagenda.htm>.

Nationally known speakers focused on concrete solutions to the health issues children in our nation are facing, including Dr. David Satcher; Anne Venneman, US Secretary of Agriculture; Julie O'Sullivan Maillet, President of The American Dietetic Association; Lynn Swann, Chair of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports; and Vice Admiral Richard A. Carmona, US Surgeon General.

At the summit, Julie Allington, Wisconsin Team Nutrition Project Director, was one of 27 individuals nationwide to be named a *Healthy Schools Hero* for working to provide nutrition education and training for teachers, food service professionals and parents. For more information, go to http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/edforum/ef0608_2.html

Each state's team was given the charge to identify a few high-priority health issues and to begin formulating a plan with strategies/resources to address those issues. The Summit's guiding document, "Commitment to Change," set the stage by identifying the principles:

- Schools provide a total learning environment for developing and practicing lifelong behaviors.
- Poor dietary habits diminish nutrient quality and thereby contribute to sub-optimal health status and performance.
- The amount of time children are engaged in physical activity continues to decrease.
- There is a national imperative to improve academic performance and close gaps among ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

Wisconsin Healthy Schools Coalition

To meet the challenge of providing a healthier school environment, schools must form public-private partnerships. Partners should represent the various parties that influence the school environment and curriculum and those who can influence the adoption of policies and practices that support healthier lifestyles.

To that end and as a result of the Healthy Schools Summit, Wisconsin's team is holding an organizational meeting this January to form our state's Healthy Schools Coalition – *Taking Action for Children's Nutrition and Fitness*. The coalition will be comprised of public and private partners. Over 40 organizations have been invited to participate on this coalition, to significantly impact the health of students through improved

All schools in America should provide a healthy environment where children learn and participate in positive dietary and lifestyle behaviors.

school nutrition environments. The coalition will be chaired by Sara Schmitz, food service manager of the Green Bay School District and is being organized by Julie Allington from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Laura Wilford from Dairy Council of Wisconsin.

Potential coalition activities include development of a state-level nutrition policy, offering three regional workshops on nutrition and physical activity in the 2003-2004 school year, and serving as a communication conduit for the many separate activities done throughout the state to improve the health of children.

If you are interested in participating in Wisconsin's Healthy Schools coalition or would like to offer suggestions for the focus of the coalition, please contact Julie Allington at 608-267-9120/ julie.allington@dpi.state.wi.us, Sara Schmitz at 920-391-2566/ sschmitz@greenbay.k12.wi.us, or Laura Wilford at 262-792-1103/ lauraw@dcww.com.

Helping mothers with young children to be more active

Women with young children often have a hard time getting enough physical activity. A study conducted with 554 mothers of young children investigated two strategies for encouraging physical activity, and also looked at other factors that influenced the resulting behavior change.

Participants in the study were randomly assigned to one of three groups: a control group, a group that received only a print booklet encouraging physical activity, or a group that received the booklet and also participated in a focus group to discuss barriers to being physically active.

After the focus groups determined that partner support and self-efficacy were important determinants of behavior change, the intervention continued as participants, researchers, and community organizations made the following efforts in their communities:

- Local gyms were encouraged to provide better child care, and to make their schedules more “mom-friendly,” for example, scheduling

water aerobics at the same time as children’s swim lessons.

- Low-cost fitness classes were organized in community buildings, with adequate child care provided.
- Events were scheduled where families could be active together, or where mothers could participate in one activity while partners and children participated in another.
- Women initiated activities in their own communities, such as walking groups that met immediately after delivering children to child care, or tennis groups that rotated playing and childcare.

After controlling for age and physical activity level before the intervention, women who received only the print intervention were no more active than the control group after 8 weeks. The women who received the print

...partner support and self-efficacy were important determinants of behavior change

intervention and participated in the focus group were more likely to be more active than controls after 8 weeks. In addition, women who reported improved self-efficacy and partner support were more likely to meet physical activity guidelines after the intervention.

The authors comment that interventions to produce change only at the personal level may not be as effective as those that target multiple levels of influence. Different delivery methods may also make a difference. The print materials came from a “faceless” external source, while the women were much more involved in the intensive intervention which may have made it more relevant, as well as fostering a feeling of ownership. The intervention effect was small and did not endure through long-term follow-up. Improvements in partner support did not endure, either. Ongoing support may be necessary to make behavior change, in women and their partners, sustainable.

Miller YD, Trost SG, Brown WJ. Mediators of physical activity behavior change among women with young children. *Am J Prev Med.* 2002;23(2S):98-103.

Health vs. fitness (continued from page 1)

physical activity? The total amount. Consistently getting the recommended amount of moderate physical activity, even if it takes place 10 or 15 minutes at a time, will yield greater health benefits than occasional, more intense strenuous exercise.

So why bother working up a sweat? **The difference between moderate physical activity and strenuous exercise comes down to the difference between health benefits and fitness benefits.** If someone wants fitness benefits – for example, improved lung

capacity or better performance at a sport – they need to exercise intensely and work up a sweat. If someone simply wants health benefits – such as reduced risk of heart disease or diabetes – they can get those from moderate intensity physical activity.

The bottom line remains: going from no activity to moderate activity produces greater benefit than going from moderate to very strenuous activity.

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Our Mission

The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Network facilitates collaborative planning of nutrition education programs at the state and local levels. We promote healthful and enjoyable eating so that Wisconsin's low income individuals and families receive consistent, positive, relevant, accurate, and effective nutrition messages.

Nutri-Net News is published quarterly. It is available on the web or by mail.

Network Prepares for Spring 2003 Campaign

WALK, DANCE, PLAY Campaign Teleconference

Nutrition educators from 46 counties, Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, and the Menominee Reservation participated in a training teleconference for the Network sponsored **WALK, DANCE, PLAY...Be Active Every Day!** Campaign on October 31, 2002. These nutrition educators represented WIC/Public Health, WNEP/Extension, Head Start, Elderly Nutrition Programs, schools and other local agencies and programs with a nutrition education component. They will be educating food stamp eligible parents, grandparents, and guardians about the need to serve as good role models by engaging in regular physical activity and healthy eating habits in order to encourage healthy habits in their children and grandchildren. The multi-agency campaign message is being targeted for promotion during the months of March, April, and May 2003.

The training teleconference included background information that shaped

the campaign's message, unveiling of the campaign web site and materials, logistics of materials ordering and required campaign evaluation activities, and time for nutrition educators to connect with their colleagues from other agencies and programs to develop plans for their local campaigns. One hundred fourteen teleconference participants completed a training tele-



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conference evaluation that rated each of the above sections on how well it helped them in planning for their local WALK, DANCE, PLAY Campaign. (5=very helpful and 1=not helpful.) The average teleconference rating was 3.84 with many positive comments regarding the use of the teleconference format (saving time and money) versus driving to a regional workshop. Participants felt the web site section and time planning sections were the most helpful components of the teleconference with respective scores of 4.32 and 4.03.

Campaign Materials

The tip sheets arrived from the printer several days before Christmas ... joining the many boxes of magnets and posters. Orders were filled in plenty of time for the spring promotion of the campaign. **Special thanks to all who were able to pick up their order in Madison, and to those who delivered orders throughout the state to save on mailing costs.** Interactive displays, sample newsletter articles/press releases and school lunch menu backs/parent handouts will be available to download from the website. Spanish language materials available on the website will include tipsheets, a parent handout, and a bilingual display. The Idea Sharing section of the website will include links to materials developed by county partners.

Looking Ahead

The Network looks forward to the Spring 2003 promotion of WALK, DANCE, PLAY...Be Active Every Day as well as local feedback on the campaign's effectiveness in reaching target audiences, enhancing nutrition education programs, and impacting local partnering. For agencies/programs that didn't participate this year, note that it will be offered again in the Spring of 2004.