

NUTRI-NET NEWS

July 1999

MEDIA MATTERS

This newsletter is a service of the Nutrition Education Network of Wisconsin, funded by a grant from the Food Stamp Program, Food and Nutrition Service, United States Department of Agriculture, and administered through the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It is designed to enhance coordination and communication among agencies and organizations that educate Wisconsin's low income individuals and families about nutrition and food. *Nutri-Net News* shares brief information about programs and materials that support healthful and enjoyable eating.

Mother's Nutrition Knowledge and Children's Dietary Intakes

Many studies assess an individual's nutrition knowledge and compare that to the person's eating habits. This model assumes that the individual is responsible for what they choose to eat. Relatively little research has looked at the relationship between a child's diet and the nutrition knowledge of the people who are responsible for meal planning or preparation.

Using U.S. food consumption data, researchers have found that the level of a mother's nutrition knowledge affects the dietary intakes of children between the ages of 2-17. This relationship is particularly strong at the ages of 2-5 because they are more dependent on food supplied by the caregiver. After the age of five, the importance of the mother's nutrition knowledge declines perhaps due to more foods eaten away from home

and more independent food choices made by the children themselves.

Greater maternal nutrition knowledge showed significantly lower levels of total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium intake for preschool children. It also translated into higher levels of fiber. Maternal nutrition knowledge did not have an effect on iron or calcium intakes. This could be because less media attention is given to calcium and iron (as compared to fat and cholesterol) and therefore mothers do not perceive it as a serious problem.

(Continued on page 2)

Subscription Information

Nutri-Net News is published quarterly.

Contact:
Kate Pederson
WI Nutrition Education
Network Coordinator
Nutritional Sciences
1415 Linden Drive
Madison, WI 53706-1571
Phone: (608)265-2108
FAX: (608)262-5860
e-mail: pederson@nutrisci.wisc.edu

Nutri-Net News

Researchers found that other factors also play a role in improved dietary intakes of children.

- **Employment status:** Children whose mothers work full-time have a higher total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol intakes than those that have part-time working mothers. This could be due to the lack of time to prepare healthier foods and fewer hours to influence their children's food intake.
- **Vegetarianism:** Increased fiber intake was found in all of the children when at least one member in the family was a vegetarian. Calories from fat and saturated fat were found to be lower only in school-aged children with a vegetarian family member.
- **Participation in Food Assistance Programs:** Food Stamp Program participation was found to be positively associated with lower saturated fat intake in 2-5 year olds and higher fiber intake by 6-17 year olds. School-age children from households participating in WIC had higher fat and cholesterol intakes; the authors speculate this may be because WIC benefits include eggs, cheese, and milk.

Variyam JN, et al. Mother's Nutrition Knowledge & Children's Dietary Intakes. *Am.J Agr. Econ.* 1999;81;373-384

Could there be Hunger in America?

With a booming economy, low unemployment rates, earned income credits and food assistance for the poor, more Americans should be enjoying rising household incomes and expanded opportunities. A national survey in 1995 shows though that 4.2 million households (4.1% of all U.S. households) had one or more persons that reported experiencing reduced food intake because of a lack of financial resources. Almost 20% of those households (817,000) had one or more members experience severe hunger, meaning that thousands of adults and children experience the uneasy or painful sensation caused by a recurrent and involuntary lack of food.

A larger group of households are classified as food insecure. About 11.9 million (12% of all U.S. households) experienced hunger and were at-risk of hunger. Many people who are food insecure but are not hungry (7.8%) are concerned about the adequacy, quality, and variety of food in their household (see figure below).

(Continued on page 3)

Nutri-Net News

Food assistance programs reduce hunger but may not eliminate it completely. Half of the households that experienced hunger reported that they received food assistance a month earlier. Some of the shortfalls could be due to the lack of Federal food assistance programs available to many communities. For example, many areas do not have a Summer Food Service Program for low income children during the summer school vacation.

What families are at risk?

- Households with children
- Households with a lower income
- Black and Hispanic households with children were twice as likely to be food insecure and experiencing hunger than White households.
- Female-headed households were four-times as likely to experience hunger than those with husband-wife headed households.

Klein B. Could There Be Hunger in America? Family Economic and Nutrition Review. 1998;11:52-54.

Using Newsletters to improve Fruit Consumption

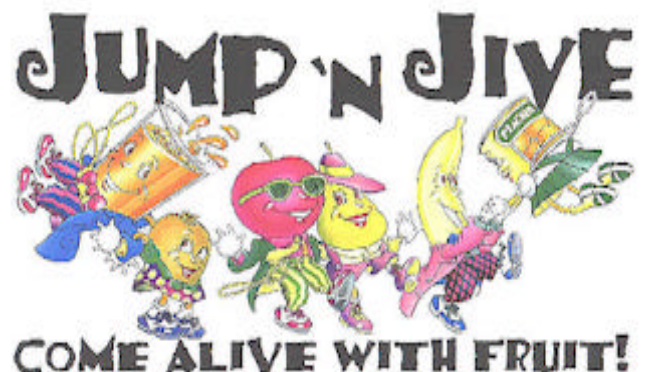
Current research has found that newsletters can be effective in improving adults' consumption of fruits and vegetables and therefore may contribute to improved dietary habits of their children. Researchers attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of computer-tailored newsletters and non-tailored newsletters to improve fruit and vegetable consumption in adults. Four groups were given

Tools of the Trade

pre- and post- surveys to evaluate consumption. Groups consisted of a control group and 3 intervention groups receiving nontailored newsletters, computer-tailored newsletters, or tailored-newsletters with goal-setting. Participants received 1 newsletter each month for 4 months. The newsletters were written by a team of nutritionists and health educators focusing on improving fruit and vegetable consumption by providing tips for when cooking and eating out.

Computer-tailored newsletters have shown to improve other health behaviors such as smoking cessation, mammography use, and even dietary fat intake. This study suggests newsletters with action-oriented messages can be as effective in improving fruit and vegetable consumption as computer-tailored newsletters.

Lutz SF, et al. Innovative Newsletter Interventions improve fruit and vegetable consumption in healthy adults. JADA 1999;99:705-709



Nutri-Net News

NETWORK UPDDATE

Network members and Dane and Rock county nutrition education partners from WNEP, WIC, Elderly Nutrition, schools and Head Start explored ways to promote fruit and juice for breakfast at a workshop on May 21, 1999.

The day began with an introduction to the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Network and its preliminary plans for the *JUMP 'N JIVE* social marketing campaign that will be piloted in the two counties during the months of September and October. In addition, a brief overview of the social marketing model, plans for the pilot evaluation, and goals for community collaboration were presented during the morning. The workshop's afternoon was an opportunity for nutrition educators to connect with their colleagues from other agencies and programs, share ideas, and develop activities for the campaign.

Participant evaluations reflected a very successful workshop (average score was 4.57 with 5=excellent and 1=poor). Participants also felt confident that they will be coordinating their work with other agencies during this campaign (average score was 4.04 with 5=very confident and 1=not at all confident).

As a result of all the creative, behavior-based brainstorming ideas that the workshop produced, three committees are now busy preparing tip sheets, interactive displays, and food demonstrations. These nutrition activities

Network Update

will complement the awareness building vehicles of billboards, school lunch menus backs, and newsletters. *JUMP 'N JIVE . . . Come Alive With Fruit!* will swing into Dane and Rock counties on strategically placed, colorful billboards, school lunch menu backs, and newsletters in this fall's pilot project.

The website for the Network will also be used as a medium to share campaign resources, e.g., tip sheets, display ideas/directions, and food demonstration lesson plans. Currently, the web site has a catalog of nutrition education resources, a calendar of upcoming events, information on social marketing, and links to web sites of participating agencies in the Network. (<http://nutrisci.wisc.edu/nutrinet>)

Along with Wisconsin Extension's WNEP, the Network has sent in a plan to the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) for the upcoming fiscal year. If approved, the Network hopes to improve and expand the "*Jump 'N Jive*" pilot to additional counties in year 2000.

OUR MISSION:

The Nutrition Education Network of Wisconsin 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 one way that the Network shares information and resources to accomplish this mission.