



PHOTO: LSU

## Nutrition and Health

# Improving health and wellness in children and adults

Obesity affects 42.4% of children and adults in the United States and causes chronic diseases, higher morbidity rates, and increased health care costs. Children with obesity are more likely to have health issues such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, Type 2 diabetes, asthma and joint problems. Obese children are also more likely to become obese adults. The Land-Grant University System is improving health and wellness through programs that focus on exercise and increased activity, food choices and lifestyles that prevent disease.

### Successful examples include:

- **California** Extension programs are helping low-income community members increase their purchasing power, reduce hunger and improve nutrition. There has been a 171% increase in fresh fruit and vegetable purchases among participants since the program started. Additionally, these purchases generated \$386,000 in direct income to local farmers and farmers markets.
- **Connecticut** researchers and Extension educators promoted healthier diet and physical activities in children to prevent obesity through tailored nutrition messages delivered digitally. The project improves diet healthiness of children and young adults in clinical and school settings.
- The University of **Florida** Extension created an eight-week online program to prepare military members for peak performance after COVID-19 closed gyms and fitness facilities. Partnerships with military organizations sustain the program.
- Researchers in **Ohio** surveyed 500 people from around the country about daily food patterns during COVID-19. It showed that 58% of respondents cooked at home more frequently and almost 50% said their cooking and food management levels improved. Results from this study are being used to help reduce food waste.

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## [www.landgrantimpacts.org](http://www.landgrantimpacts.org)

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- Purdue Extension in **Indiana** developed a walking program for adults to increase physical activity, a positive factor for health and weight. At baseline, participants reported walking an average of 146.2 minutes per week, and this increased to 310.3 minutes after the program. At baseline, 28% met national physical activity guidelines and this increased to 92% after the walking program.

### School gardens promote nutrition and health

*School gardens create opportunities for students to learn, grow and play while learning science, math, English, environmental studies, health, family and consumer sciences and art. Students learn firsthand about plants, nature and the outdoors, and about growing fresh food. School gardens become a living laboratory where learning comes alive.*

Students are excited and motivated to try fruits and vegetables because they are responsible for planting, caring for and harvesting them. Besides creating a positive attitude toward fruits and vegetables, school gardens also provide opportunities for physical activity, whether that is preparing the beds, raking, watering or weeding. Studies show that school gardening increases self-esteem, helps students develop a sense of ownership and responsibility, helps foster relationships with family members and increases parent involvement. **Louisiana** showed statistical significance in nutrition, physical activity, and garden knowledge areas on a pre- and post-test evaluation in an elementary school garden.