



Nutrition and Health

PHOTO: UCONN

Plant Improvements Improve Livelihoods

Connecting exercise and nutrition enhances disease prevention and healthful outcomes in youths and adults. Diabetes costs billions in medical expenses and lost productivity each year. Exercise is one prevention and management strategy for diabetes, as well as obesity and other diseases. Physically active lifestyles also enhance mood and mental health.

Successful examples include:

- In **Arkansas**, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program participants learned ways to choose healthier foods and to incorporate physical activity while working and schooling their children from home. Of the participants, 76% of adults reported being more physically active.
- **American Samoa** focused on helping parents with special needs children incorporate exercise drills and dance into daily activities at home, which, partnered with nutrition education, improved healthful outcomes.
- In **Florida**, the addition of an online support system helped improve activity levels, increased exercise intensity and improved health measures for participants, with 57% regularly participating in moderate to vigorous physical activity.
- **Georgia** participants lost 1,924 pounds collectively through 25 programs that provided 2,700 hours of instruction on diabetes prevention. Participants and Extension agents worked together to find solutions to the common barriers of a healthy lifestyle, many of which were amplified during the COVID-19 lockdowns.
- Extension educators in **Oregon** worked to make exercise programming accessible to all audiences, of any ability level. The virtual option provided access to more options, and the shorter exercise programs offered increased flexibility.
- In **Texas**, Extension educators used a community approach, and participants created teams of people that collaborated to walk 832 miles – the distance across the state. More than 155,000 people have participated to date.

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Reducing lifetime medical expenses

Medical research shows that exercise and weight loss can reduce the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Sustained levels of physical activity can prevent these diseases for some people. The average annual health care cost (age-adjusted) for people without diabetes is \$7,151, while the average annual cost for people with diabetes is \$16,752. The average annual health care cost (age-adjusted) for people without cardiovascular disease is \$5,269, while the average annual cost for people with cardiovascular disease is \$11,192.

The estimated lifetime health-care cost savings are more than \$133,000 for Type 2 diabetes and more than \$44,000 for cardiovascular disease. Including the avoidance of lost wages further amplifies the savings. Participants in **land-grant** university health programs also benefit through reduced incidence, severity and health care costs of other chronic diseases that are linked to excessive weight and inactivity.