

Food and Nutrition Education in Communities

Cornell Cooperative Extension of New York State

352 Martha Van Rensselaer Hall; Ithaca, NY

(607) 255-7715 Telephone

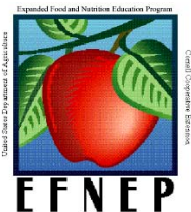
Fax (607)255-0027

The United States Census Bureau estimates 15% of the residents within our state are living in poverty, currently \$20,650 for a family of four. Low income is associated with numerous health problems, including obesity, chronic disease, and poor pregnancy outcomes. Positive changes in these practices are integral to avoiding the negative consequences of these health conditions. Our Cooperative Extension nutrition education programs provide knowledge and skill development in:

- Nutrition practices/food selection
- Food safety
- Food resource management
- Physical activity

Cornell Cooperative Extension programs provide nutrition education to the New York State limited-resource populations. Program examples include:

- Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program and
- Food Stamp Nutrition Education



The **Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)** is hosted at land-grant universities in every state and in U.S. territories. In New York State, Cornell Cooperative Extension sponsors the program. EFNEP targets families with young children at 185% or less of the federal poverty level.

Food Stamp Nutrition Education, known in New York State as **Eat Smart New York! (ESNY!)**, is administered through the USDA Food and Nutrition Service and the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. ESNY! targets food stamp recipients.



Cornell Cooperative Extension educators in 53 counties and five NYC boroughs oversee the work of 272 paraprofessionals who teach limited-resource individuals about food and nutrition practices. These paraprofessionals usually live in the communities where they work and recruit families and receive referrals from neighborhood contacts and community agencies.

A nutrition study at Cornell University assessed the food security of 16,146 participants in a multi-ethnic, low-income population over three years. The study found that EFNEP participants who completed six or more lessons experienced significantly less food insecurity (unable to use traditional means for food acquisition and management) than those who dropped out of the program early. In fact, the more lessons attended, the more their ratings on food security improved.

Nutrition Education through EFNEP and ESNY!

During 2008, **19,317** adults, representing **46,711** family members, participated in nutrition education opportunities in New York State. Lessons were provided in a series, delivered over time, allowing participants the opportunity to develop skills, increase knowledge and incorporate changes into their daily lives. Of the enrolled adults, **13,533 (70%)** completed the series of lessons. Additionally, **10,762** youth received education designed to increase their awareness of healthy eating and the benefits of being physically active.

Evaluation findings demonstrate that our programs are effective at:

- ❖ Motivating people to adopt healthy eating and lifestyle behaviors
- ❖ Enhancing practices related to thrifty shopping and preparation of nutritious foods
- ❖ Ensuring that individuals and families have enough to eat without resorting to emergency food assistance.

Graduated participants report these improvements in their knowledge and skills:

- **81%** improved their nutrition practices
(i.e. making health food choices, reading nutrition facts labels, drinking lower fat milk, etc.)
- **63%** improved their food safety practices
(i.e. thawing and storing foods properly)
- **76%** improved their food resource management skills
(i.e. planning meals, comparing prices, using grocery lists, etc.)
- **41%** improved their frequency of being physically active
- **30%** improved in all measured practices

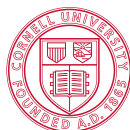
Retention studies document that these desirable practices continue at least one year after graduation.

Strategies for Nutrition Education

Both EFNEP and ESNY! enroll adults and youth in small groups or one-on-one sessions, delivered over time, to facilitate knowledge gain leading to behavior change. The effectiveness of the adult program is measured through assessing a participant's knowledge and behavior prior to education, then again, post education. Participants graduate when nutrition education goals have been met and the pre and post assessments have been completed. The youth program reaches youth in pre-defined groups and provides education to facilitate mastery of skills in nutrition and health. The impact of these lessons is assessed at the group level.

Partnerships/Collaborations:

Collaborations and agreements with community partners help us reach participants more effectively.



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension

