

The Paradox of Hunger and Obesity

In Vermont, hunger and obesity exist in the same households. Families on limited income are running out of food or relying on cheap, often high fat foods that promote weight gain. Good nutrition is financially out of reach for many Vermonters. The new diet guidelines promote more fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and whole grains which are some of the more expensive items in local supermarkets. Vermonters with limited food budgets must rely on high calorie, inexpensive foods that may promote overweight and obesity. Ensuring that children and families have access to a consistent supply of healthy food is essential to addressing the epidemic of childhood obesity.



Statistics show that...

- Obesity in children and youth has lifelong health risks including diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure.
- Overweight children are more likely to suffer from low self esteem and depression.
- These children will likely grow up to be overweight as adults: 80% of obese teenagers will be obese as adults.
- Poor diet and physical inactivity is currently the second leading cause of death in the United States though it may soon overtake tobacco as the number one killer.
- 26% of Vermont children in grades 8 to 12 are overweight for their age and height.
- Low-income girls at risk for hunger, who participated in the Food Stamp Program, School Breakfast, and School Lunch were at 70% lower risk of being overweight.

Poverty leads to poor nutrition

- Limited resources require families to purchase inexpensive foods that are sustaining: typically foods high in fat and starch (See table on back).
- Families in poverty often skip meals to stretch the food budget and may overeat when food is available.
- Low-income families are often working several jobs and have little time to prepare meals and may rely on convenience and “fast foods” that are high in calories.

Poverty restricts healthy living options

- Individuals living in poor neighborhoods and rural areas may not have easy access to supermarkets with inexpensive and good quality produce, meats, and dairy products. A recent study found that the further a person lives from a supermarket the less fruits and vegetables they ate, and the higher their risk of obesity.
- Low-income children may not have access to safe or supervised physical activities after school or during vacations.
- Television and computers are increasingly used as cheap babysitters: 35% of Vermont children in grades 8 to 12 spend three or more hours daily watching TV or with computers.
- Fast foods and “fun” convenience foods are often entertainment as well as nourishment for low-income families with few funds to spend on other forms of entertainment.

Thrifty vs. Low Cost: A Sample Menu

<u>Thrifty Food Plan Menu</u>
Waffles with syrup Fruit Punch
Bologna and Cheese Sandwich Potato Chips Fruit Cocktail Fruit Punch
Popcorn Soda
Chicken Nuggets Macaroni and Cheese Green Beans Milk Ice cream Sandwich
Cost: \$4.37 Calories: 3,150

<u>Low Cost Food Plan Menu</u>
Cereal and Milk Banana Orange Juice
Roast Beef Sandwich Whole Wheat Pretzels Carrot Sticks Orange Milk
Oatmeal Raisin Cookies
Salmon Pasta with Cheese Broccoli Green Salad Milk Frozen Yogurt
Cost: \$9.28 Calories: 2,250

900 calories more per person when spending less than half the money

Thrifty Food Plan has less than the recommended dietary intake for critical nutrients and more fat

Percent of Recommended dietary intake


