



Healthy Behaviors: Southeastern Pennsylvanians' Efforts to Improve their Overall Health

August 2017

There are a number of actions individuals can take to improve their health outcomes, and data from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey show that many people in our area are taking charge of their own health. This article looks at just a few of the lifestyle changes and care activities that people in our region are taking on to improve their health and wellbeing.

Routine Care

A large proportion of adults in Southeastern Pennsylvania (86.8%) have seen a doctor or other healthcare provider in the past year. This represents 2.7 million people age 18 or older in our five-county region. Older adults age 65 or older are more likely to have received medical care in the past year (96.6% as compared with 84.5%). Adults with better access to healthcare are more likely to have had these visits. Among adults 18-64, 91.2% of those with both medical insurance and a regular source of care saw a healthcare provider in the past year.

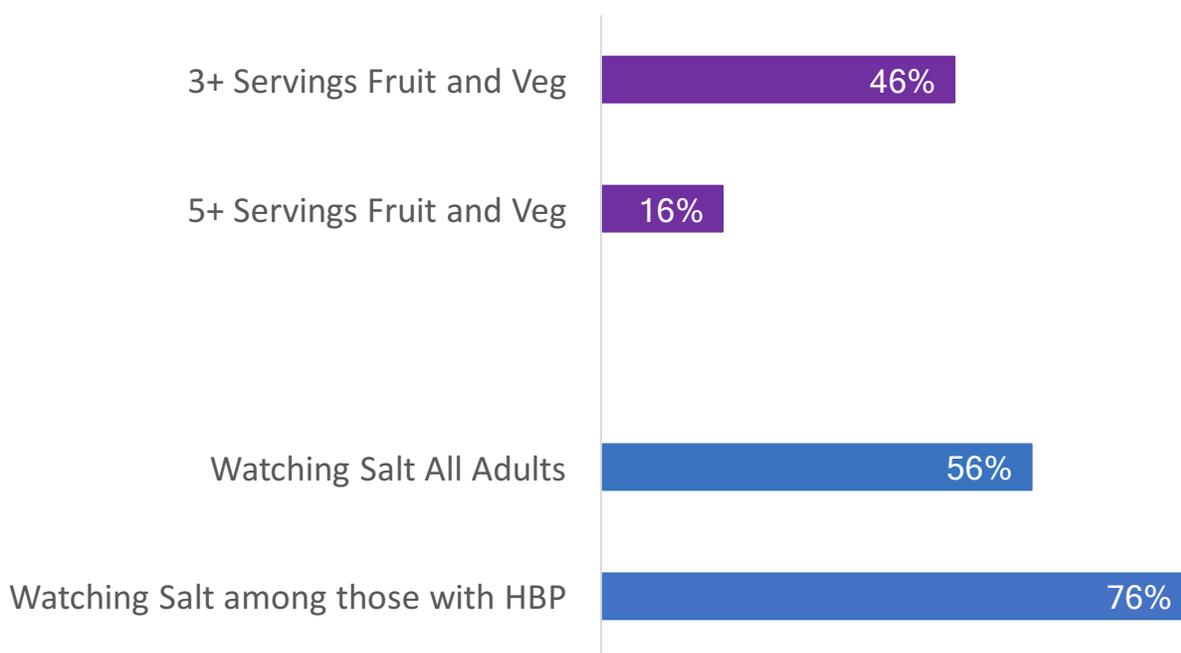
Two-thirds of SEPA adults (67.9% or 2.1 million individuals) had a dental visit in the past year. With or without dental insurance, cost can be a barrier to dental care for many people. Among SEPA adults living below the Federal Poverty Level, a smaller proportion, 47.9% received dental care in the past year, as compared with 70.8% of those living above the Federal Poverty Level.

Mental health care, including inpatient and outpatient programs, regular therapy or counseling and/or medication can be difficult to obtain. In our region, 9.2% of all adults (approximately 344,000 people) report receiving care for these conditions.

Cigarette Smoking

About 17% of adults in our region smoke cigarettes, which is comparable to national numbers. Among the approximately 541,000 smokers in the region, more than half (58.7%) have tried to quit smoking in the past year. One quarter of smokers who tried to quit (25%) used nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) alone and another 4% of those who tried to quit used NRT in combination with another method.

Selected Dietary Behaviors, SEPA Adults 18+



Diet

SEPA includes both rolling farmlands and dense urban areas with varying access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Across the region, nearly half of adults (45.6%) eat three or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day. The USDA recommends adults eat 5-13 servings, depending on age and activity level, and nearly 500,000 adults in our region (15.7%) eat five or more servings each day.

More than half of adults in our region (55.5%) say they're watching their salt intake, representing more than 1.7 million adults trying to control the amount of salt in their diets. Among those adults who have been diagnosed with

hypertension or high blood pressure, more than three-quarters (76.1%) are watching their salt intakes.

Exercise

More than three-quarters of SEPA adults (78.3%) are exercising every week, and more than half (51.6%) report exercising for half an hour or longer three times a week or more. Exercise is linked with physical health, both because physical fitness improves health outcomes and because illness can limit an individual's activity. Among adults who describe their health as fair or poor, a smaller proportion are getting regular physical activity. About six-tenths of those in fair or poor health, 61.9%, say they exercise at least once a week, and 37.9% of this group exercises three or more times per week.

There are a range of actions that can improve individual health, from small changes to lifestyle overhauls. Across our region, many adults are taking steps to improve or maintain their health.

Rose Malinowski Weingartner
Evaluation Specialist

For more information about this topic or the SEPA HHS, contact Francine Axler at Francine@PHMC.org.

