



COMMUNITY HEALTH DATA BASE

An Information Service of Public Health Management Corporation

Data findings

NUTRITION AND ACCESS TO QUALITY FOOD IN SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

March 2011

March is National Nutrition Month! The American Dietetic Association's theme for National Nutrition Month is "Eat Right with Color," emphasizing the importance of including plenty of colorful seasonal produce in our diets.

In recognition of National Nutrition Month, this article presents data on adult nutrition and access to fresh food from the 2010 Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey. The Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey is a biennial, random digit dial telephone survey of over 10,000 households in the five-county region of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties.

The data show that many adults in our region may not be getting the nutrition their bodies require. The USDA's MyPyramid website offers personalized plans to determine nutritional needs based on age, sex, height, weight and physical activity level, <http://www.mypyramid.gov/mypyramid/index.aspx>, but in our area, many adults eat few fruits and vegetables.

The American Dietetic Association's website provides tips and tricks for increasing consumption of healthy foods, <http://www.eatright.org/Public/content.aspx?id=206>, however, survey results show that in Philadelphia and the surrounding counties, some adults don't have access to the fresh fruits and vegetables they need for a healthy diet.

Nutrition

Four in ten adults (18+) in SEPA (40.1%) eat fast food at least once a week. This represents approximately 1.2 million adults in our region. This is more common among adults living in poverty; nearly half of adults living below the Federal Poverty Line (48.2%) eat fast food once a week or more often, while 39.0% of adults living above the Federal Poverty line do the same.

- Nearly half of adults (18+) in Southeastern Pennsylvania eat fewer than three servings of fruits or vegetables each day. This represents approximately 1.4 million adults in our region.

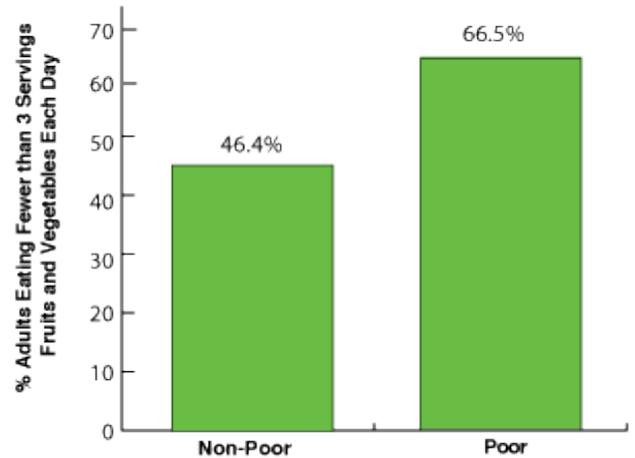
Some people are more likely to fall into this category than others. Racial and ethnic identity, gender, geographic location and socio-economic status are all tied to fruit and vegetable consumption.

- Men are more likely than women to eat three or fewer servings of fruits and vegetables each day - 56.9% of men and 41.5% of women in SEPA eat less than three servings of fruits or vegetables in an average day.



- Black and Latino adults are more likely to fall into this group, with nearly 2/3 of Black adults (62.4%) and nearly 2/3 of Latino adults (62.2%) eating less than three fruits or vegetables each day, compared with 51.9% of Asian adults and 43.9% of White adults.
- Adults in Philadelphia (57.9%) are more likely than suburban adults (42.1%) to eat less than three servings of fruits or vegetables each day.
- Two-thirds of adults living below the Federal Poverty Line (66.5%) eat less than three servings of fruits and vegetables each day, compared with 46.4% of adults living above the Federal Poverty Line.
- The data show signs linking a healthy diet to overall health, as adults in SEPA who eat less than three servings of fruits or vegetables each day are more likely to describe their health as fair or poor (20.2%) than are adults who eat three or more servings of fruits or vegetables each day (11.9%).

Figure 1: Low Fruit and Vegetable Consumption by Poverty Status, Adults (18+), SEPA 2010



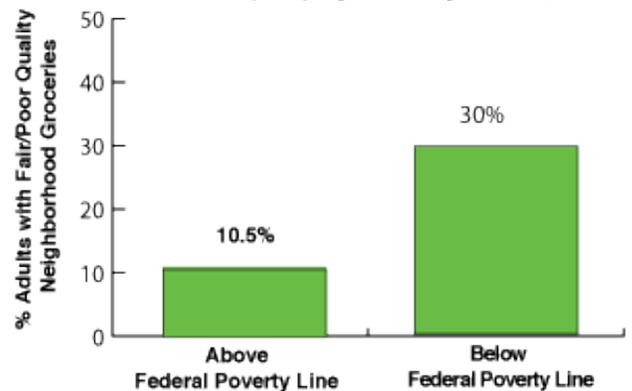
Source: PHMC's Community Health Data Base 2010 Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey

Access to Food

About one in eight adults in SEPA (12.7%) describes the quality of groceries in their neighborhood as fair or poor. This is more common among adults living in poverty. While one in three adults living below the Federal Poverty Line in SEPA (30%) describes the quality of their groceries as fair or poor, about one in ten adults living above the Federal Poverty Line (10.5%) describes the quality of their groceries the same way.

- More than a quarter of adults in SEPA (28.4%) have to travel outside of their neighborhood to get to a supermarket. This represents approximately 851,000 adults in our area. Adults without supermarkets in their neighborhoods are more likely to describe their health as fair or poor (20.7%) than adults with supermarkets in their neighborhoods (14.4%).
- While most adults in SEPA say it is "very easy" or "easy" to find fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood, one in twenty adults in our area (4.9%) describes finding fruit locally as either "difficult" or "very difficult."
- About one in eight (12.9%) SEPA adults living below the Federal Poverty Line describe their experience finding fruit and vegetables in their neighborhood as difficult or very difficult, compared to one in twenty five (3.8%) adults living about the Federal Poverty Line.

Figure 2: Quality of Neighborhood Groceries among adults (18+) by Poverty Status, SEPA, 2010.



Source: PHMC's Community Health Data Base 2010 Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey

Adults who have an easier time finding fresh produce in their neighborhoods are less likely to describe their health as fair or poor than adults who have a more difficult time.

- 13.1% of adults who have a very easy time finding fruits or vegetables in their neighborhood describe their health as fair or poor.
- 19.1% of adults who have an easy time finding fruits or vegetables in their neighborhood describe their health as fair or poor.
- 30.6% of adults who have a difficult time finding fruits or vegetables in their neighborhood describe their health as fair or poor.
- 48.1% of adult who have a very difficult time finding fruits or vegetables in their neighborhood describe their health as fair or poor.

More than one in ten adults in SEPA (11.2%) has had to cut the size of their meal or skip a meal in the past year because there was not enough money in the budget for food. This was somewhat more common among women (12.9%) than among men (9.1%). Adults who had cut the size of a meal or skipped meals in the past year because of money were more than twice as likely (36.8%) to describe themselves in fair or poor health than adults who had not (13.6%).

In Southeastern Pennsylvania, many adults may be getting insufficient fruits and vegetables for their nutritional needs. Demographic and geographic factors play a role, making the task of finding the fruits and vegetables necessary for a healthy diet a challenge for some families in SEPA.

For more information on the Community Health Data Base, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey or nutrition and access to fresh foods in the five-county area, please contact Rose Malinowski Weingartner at rosemw@phmc.org.