



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STUDY FINDS MANY IN OUR REGION DO NOT EAT ENOUGH PRODUCE

More Than Half of SEPA Adults Eat Fewer Than Three Daily Servings of Fruits or Vegetables

PHILADELPHIA – In 2011, 35-year-old Joan,* came to Public Health Management Corporation's (PHMC) Health Connection, a nurse-managed, health care facility, with a single concern. Her fears about her weight, together with her family history of diabetes and hypertension, were keeping her up at night. As a working mother to two young teens, ages 15 and 17, she knew she wanted to take immediate control of her health. But she didn't know how. And whether she could afford it.

Enter Tiffany Mack, a nutrition educator from Health Promotion Council (HPC), a PHMC affiliate, based in Health Connections. She has seen many clients like Joan whose concerns about their budget overshadow their desire to eat healthy. The majority of her clients are low income and therefore struggle to increase oftentimes expensive fruits and vegetables in their diets.

Community Health Data Base (CHDB), a program of PHMC, has been tracking these issues for the last 20 years. In 2012, CHDB conducted its biennial Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey, which collected information about access to fruit and vegetables and other nutrition-related data. The results echo Mack's informal findings:

- The survey finds about one in five adults in SEPA (22.8%) eats just one serving of fruits or vegetables each day, and one in 25 (3.9%) eat no fruits or vegetables.
- More than half of SEPA adults (53.0%) eat fewer than three servings of fruits or vegetables each day. The percentage represents approximately 1,624,600 adults in the region who may not be getting adequate nutrition.
- The study found that adults in our region who eat fewer than three servings of fruits and vegetables per day are also more likely to eat fast food each week than adults who consume three or more servings of fruits or vegetables each day.
- Close to half (48.4%) of adults who eat fewer than three servings of fruits and vegetables daily also eat fast food at least weekly.

And like Joan, others have also been struggling with paying for meals. The survey found that one in eight adults in SEPA (12.5%) has cut the size of a meal or skipped a meal in the past year because there was not enough money for food. It also found that adults who described their overall health as fair or poor are two and a half times more likely to cut or skip a meal because of money than adults in excellent, very good or good health.

- Across SEPA a small percentage of adults (5.2%) say that it is difficult or very difficult to find fruit in their neighborhood, however wide variation emerges across racial/ethnic groups.
- One in ten black (10.7%) and Latino (10.3%) adults says it is difficult or very difficult to find fruit in their neighborhood, as compared with 2.6% of white adults.
- Philadelphia residents are more likely to describe fruit as difficult to find (9.4%) as compared with adults in Delaware (4.3%), Chester (2.9%), Bucks (2.5%) and Montgomery (1.6%) counties.
- About one in eight adults living below the federal poverty level (13.0%) describes fruit as difficult or very difficult to find in their neighborhood, as compared with 4.2% of adults living above the federal poverty level.
- More than 414,000 adults in the region describe the quality of groceries in their neighborhood as fair or poor. Across the region, this represents 13.4% of adults, and the percentage of adults who do not have access to high quality groceries varies by geography and socio-demographics.
- Adults living below the federal poverty level are nearly three times as likely to describe the quality of groceries in their neighborhood as fair or poor than are adults living above it (30.0% as compared with 11.1%).

Despite these odds, Joan managed to work with Mack to come up with a plan for incorporating healthier foods and physical activity that works for her. Since she started coming in 2011, she's joined a gym and lost weight. She's even convinced her 17-year old daughter to join her on her diet and together they exercise three times a week.

Mack's work with Joan is part of a much larger project. Her employer, HPC, provides nutrition education and outreach in a variety of settings. HPC is a member of the Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Tracks network, the statewide program that provides Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) to eligible low-income individuals and families. Through SNAP-Ed, HPC works to foster positive behavioral changes related to nutrition and physical activity.

Comment [LT1]: We could leave this out perhaps.

“HPC offers assistance to two PHMC health centers and seven Philadelphia Department of Public Health ambulatory health centers serving low-income, SNAP-eligible residents, where we reach 200 plus and 2000 plus patients, respectively,” reports HPC executive director Vanessa Briggs. “Our mission is to inform participants about making healthier choices and food access

around the city.” The SNAP-Ed program reached about 1,344 adults and 10,179 children in 2012 across all of Philadelphia.

*Not her real name.

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About CHDB

Public Health Management Corporation’s Community Health Data Base Household Health Survey is one of the largest regional health surveys in the country. The Pew Charitable Trusts, William Penn Foundation, United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, United Way of North Penn, Green Tree Community Health Foundation, North Penn Community Health Foundation, Thomas Scattergood Foundation, Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation, and over 350 local agencies from the health, government, nonprofit and academic sectors help to support CHDB. To view previous data news releases, please click [here](#). For more information, or to access key findings from previous years, please visit www.chdbdata.org.

About HPC

Health Promotion Council of Southeastern Pennsylvania, Inc. (HPC) is a non-profit organization organized in 1981 and an affiliate of PHMC. HPC’s mission is to promote health, and prevent and manage chronic diseases, especially among vulnerable populations, through community-based education, outreach and advocacy. Its unique programs advocating positive health behaviors, together with its innovative work with minority groups have advanced the field of health promotion in Southeastern Pennsylvania and across the nation. For more information, visit www.hccpa.org.

About PHMC

Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) is a nonprofit public health institute that creates and sustains healthier communities. PHMC uses best practices to improve community health through direct service, partnership, innovation, policy, research, technical assistance and a prepared workforce. PHMC has served the region since 1972. For more information on PHMC, visit www.phmc.org.