

PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS & UPDATES

TEXAS RESEARCH-TO-POLICY COLLABORATION PROJECT

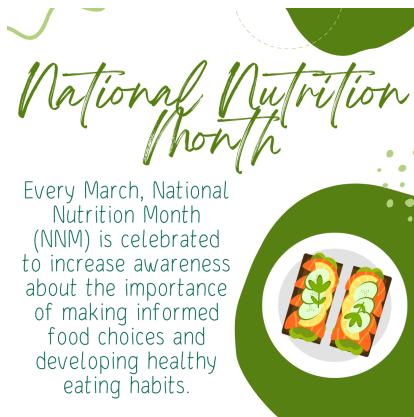
March 2024



Celebrate National Nutrition Month®



National Nutrition Month®



This year's theme is "[Beyond the Table](#)," which addresses the farm-to-fork aspect of nutrition, from food production and distribution to navigating grocery stores and farmers markets, and even home food safety and storage practices. It also describes the various ways we eat — not only around a dinner table, but also on the go, in schools and restaurants, and at games and events. This theme also includes sustainability, for instance, decreasing food waste from school and work to home and beyond.

Upcoming Events



The Founder's Award Luncheon

March 22, 2024

12 PM–1:30 PM

Texans Care for Children is hosting its annual luncheon to bring together community-minded Texans who share the common belief that every child deserves to live in a safe environment, have an enriching early education, and access the health coverage and care they need.

Upcoming Center for Healthy Living Webinars

MARCH

21

How to Make Your Own Biodegradable Plant Pots and Sow Seeds Successfully

Dolores Woods, MA, RD, LD
Nutritionist Supervisor, Nourish Program
Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living
UTHealth Houston School of Public Health

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[How to Make Your Own Biodegradable Plant Pots and Sow Seeds Successfully](#)

March 21, 2024

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM CT

March is National Nutrition Month®, with the 2024 theme as "Beyond the Table." Dolores Woods will demonstrate how to make compostable plant pots from repurposed items and teach attendees the basics on how to start vegetables from seed.

MARCH

26

Understanding Youth Movement Behaviors: Examples from the Texas SPAN Survey

Chris Pfladderer, PhD
Assistant Professor, Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences
Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living
UTHealth Houston School of Public Health in Austin

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[Understanding Youth Movement Behaviors: Texas School Physical Activity and Nutrition \(Texas SPAN\) Survey Insights](#)

March 26, 2024

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM CT

Dr. Pfladderer will address the importance of context when exploring adolescent movement behaviors. Using examples from the Texas School Physical Activity and Nutrition (Texas SPAN) survey, he will present and discuss findings from two recent studies, one that examines the associations between physical activity context and children meeting daily physical activity guidelines, and another that explores the differential effects of electronic media on sleep among 8th and 11th grade Texas adolescents.

Texas SPAN is funded by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

MARCH

28

Nutrition Intervention among Formerly Chronically Homeless Adults in Permanent Supportive Housing

Jane Hamilton, PhD, MPH, LCSW-S
Associate Professor and Co-Director, Louis A. Faillace, MD, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston
Diana Guevara, MPH, RD, LD
Community Health Education Specialist, Nourish Program
UTHealth Houston School of Public Health

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[Nutrition Intervention among Formerly Chronically Homeless Adults in Permanent Supportive Housing](#)

March 28, 2024

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM CT

Dr. Hamilton will present findings from a pilot implementation of a nutrition-focused community health worker intervention in permanent supportive housing to reduce food insecurity and improve nutrition outcomes. The pilot study utilized human-centered design, and project outcomes include improved food security and expanded preferences for healthy, easy-to-prepare foods. Participants reported positive experiences from participation in group activities including nutrition education, cooking classes, grocery store field trips and community gardening.

Congenital Syphilis

Released February 16, 2024

Congenital Syphilis

February 16, 2024

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Texas has consistently had some of the highest reported cases of both syphilis and congenital syphilis in the country.^{1,3}
 - o In 2022, approximately 25% of the nation's congenital syphilis cases came from Texas.¹
2. Congenital syphilis can have major health impacts on a baby, but the extent depends on
 - o When syphilis was acquired
 - o Whether the mother received adequate treatment.^{4,5}

Background

Congenital syphilis (CS) is a severe, disabling, and often life threatening disease seen in infants whose mothers were infected with syphilis during pregnancy and were not fully treated.

- The rate of syphilis among the general U.S. population began increasing more than a decade ago, with exponential annual increases since 2018, contributing to the rapidly increasing incidence of syphilis among pregnant women.^{4,5}



Implications

Approximately 40% of babies born to women with untreated syphilis can be stillborn or die from the infection soon after birth.⁴

- Surviving infants may be affected by lifelong health issues including bone damage, severe anemia, enlarged liver and spleen, blindness, deafness, intellectual or developmental disabilities, or seizures.^{2,4}
- People infected with syphilis often do not have symptoms — known as latent syphilis — and thus may not be aware of their infection.⁶
- As a result, the lack of timely testing and adequate treatment during pregnancy are the main drivers of CS.²

TREATMENT FOR ACTIVE SYPHILIS IN PREGNANT WOMEN CAN REDUCE THE RISK OF STILLBIRTH BY ROUGHLY 80%, HIGHLIGHTING THE PREVENTABILITY OF THIS ISSUE.⁶

UTHealth Houston School of Public Health

Texas Research on Policy Implementation Center

Food is Medicine

Released March 8, 2024

Food is Medicine

March 6, 2024

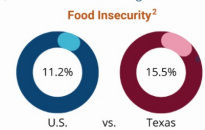
KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Food insecurity is associated with higher rates of chronic and diet-related conditions and diseases (e.g., obesity, diabetes).
2. Food is Medicine initiatives incorporate a multitude of supportive programs and services that bridge the connection between food, nutrition, and health.
3. Food is Medicine programs have been shown to help individuals and families experiencing food insecurity increase access to nutritious foods and decrease and manage chronic and diet-related diseases.

Background

Food insecurity is defined as the lack of consistent access to adequate food in order to live an active and healthy lifestyle.¹

- Food insecurity is **higher among households with children** and **higher in Texas** compared to the national average.²
- According to a report by the United States Department of Agriculture, Texas has the second-highest rate of food insecurity (15.5%) in the nation.^{2,3}
- Approximately 1 in 6 Texas households report experiencing food insecurity, equating approximately 4.6 million Texans.³
- In the United States, households with children, especially those headed by a single mother are more likely to report experiencing food insecurity.⁴
- Around \$3.87 trillion is spent annually in the United States on healthcare costs related to chronic and diet-related disease.⁵



The 2022 White House's National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health announced its goals of ending hunger and increasing nutrition security, healthy eating, and physical activity across the country by 2030 to reduce the number of health-related chronic diseases experienced by Americans.⁶

Nutrition security is the access to culturally appropriate, affordable, and healthy foods that are essential to living a healthy lifestyle.⁷



UTHealth Houston School of Public Health

Texas Research on Policy Implementation Center

This report provides recommendations on mitigating congenital syphilis (CS) in Texas.

- CS is a severe condition affecting infants born to mothers with untreated syphilis during pregnancy, leading to significant health risks such as disability and mortality.
- The number of CS cases in Texas began increasing annually over a decade ago, but the rates have increased more rapidly since 2018. There were 922 Texas CS cases in 2022 compared to 372 in 2018.
- Treatment for active syphilis in pregnant women can reduce the risk of stillbirth by 80%.

This report provides recommendations on current and future work around Food is Medicine (FIM) initiatives in Texas.

- Food insecurity (FI) is the lack of consistent access to adequate food for people to live an active and healthy lifestyle. Texas (15.5%) has a higher FI rate than the national average (11.2%).
- FIM initiatives include a wide range of supportive programs and services that bridge the critical link between nutrition and health.
- FIM programs help individuals and families increase access to nutritious food and manage diet-related chronic diseases.

Researcher Publications

Development of a Culinary Medicine Toolkit to Improve Implementation of Virtual Cooking Classes for Low-Income Adults with Type 2 Diabetes

- Culinary medicine (CM) is an educational and nutritional method that incorporates hands-on preparation skills and nutrition & dietary patterns knowledge and provides a structured approach to developing an individual's perception of food and cooking as a part of their health care.
- This study discussed the development of a virtual culinary medicine toolkit (VCMT), an online supplementary material to facilitate virtual CM interventions for low-income patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) in Texas.
- The VCMT is an innovative patient-centered approach to patient education and engagement in T2DM management and food literacy. The VCMT materials were developed to be diverse, inclusive, and culturally sensitive to improve participant interaction, engagement, and retention in the CM

interventions, and have the potential to be used by other populations.

[Pilot Implementation of a Nutrition-Focused Community-Health-Worker Intervention among Formerly Chronically Homeless Adults in Permanent Supportive Housing](#)

- People experiencing chronic homelessness have a higher risk of being food insecure, and they often struggle with continued food insecurity and poor diet quality even after transitioning to stable housing because of functional limitations, lack of life skills, and economic resources.
- This pilot program was implemented in permanent supportive housing in Houston, Texas, among 140 residents with the aim of increasing access to healthy food and improving nutrition literacy, healthy cooking & eating, and community connectedness.
- The study innovatively used a human-centered design to engage all stakeholders in prioritizing project goals and activities and incorporating adjustments and improvements based on participants' feedback. Findings highlight the need to address food insecurity along with housing difficulties to enhance nutritional outcomes for formerly chronically homeless people given limited access to resources.

Resource Corner

The TX RPC Project develops accessible and accurate public health policy-related resources from field experts. If you would like to request information on a public health topic, please complete the following form:

[Access the Request Form](#)

See below for links to specific resource categories on our website:

- [Health Policy Resources](#)
- [Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living Webinars](#)
- [TX RPC Newsletters Archive](#)
- [Texas Legislative Bill Tracker](#)
- [Texas Child Health Status Reports and Toolkits](#)
- [Newsletter Resource Sharing Form for Publication](#)

About

The [Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration \(TX RPC\) Project](#) is a nonpartisan network that aims to bridge research and policy by supporting partnerships between child health researchers and legislators.

The TX RPC Project team and overall network are available to support Texas legislators with informational requests or resources related to health during the interim and in preparation for the 2025 Legislative Session.

If you and your legislative office are interested in collaborating with our team to receive data-driven information at state, district, and local levels, please reach out to TXRPCNetwork@uth.tmc.edu.

Contact Our Team

For more information, email TXRPCNetwork@uth.tmc.edu.

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Texas Research-to-Policy
— Collaboration Project —

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