

## Avoiding a nutrient deficit while staying on a budget

Although getting all the necessary vitamins and minerals can be a challenge on a limited food budget, in many cases, it is still doable.

Commonly found in red meat, dark poultry and fresh, dark leafy vegetables, iron can also be found in several less-expensive but still nutrient-rich foods:

- Canned tuna or salmon
- Dried fruits and raisins
- Dried peas and beans

Another nutrient commonly found in fresh produce, fiber is necessary to ensure colon health. It is also shown to reduce the risk for diabetes, cardiovascular health and obesity, in part because it triggers a full feeling in the stomach faster, thus minimizing the chances of overeating.

Also found in whole wheat pasta and bread, high amounts of fiber can be found in several low-cost alternatives, including:

- Brown rice
- Dried beans

- Dried lentils
- Oatmeal

One of the B vitamins, folic acid, also known as folate, is necessary for cellular and tissue growth. It has also shown to prevent certain birth defects, including spina bifida, and lower the risk of miscarriage among pregnant women.

A water-soluble vitamin, folic acid is found primarily in spinach and other green, leafy vegetables. Other thrifty, shelf stable sources include:

- Black-eyed peas
- Peanuts
- Enriched cereal

Vitamin A, a key component for eye development, night vision and blindness prevention, is a fat soluble vitamin found primarily in dark green, red, orange and yellow produce, as well as in liver, fresh fish and dairy products. However, a single cup of frozen mixed vegetables can also help meet that micronutrient need.

In 2014, the most recent year for which data is available, 362,477 households nationwide made at least one purchase at a farmers' market using SNAP benefits.

A similar program, albeit on a smaller scale, is also offered for WIC participants in 36 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands and through six Tribes in Oklahoma, New Mexico and Mississippi.

With more sites now accepting EBT benefits, the number of SNAP redemptions at farmers' markets has jumped by 350 percent from 2009.

To further incentivize and facilitate buying fresh produce with SNAP benefits, about 500 farmers' markets nationwide offer some kind of "double up" program, providing either a dollar-to-dollar match up to a certain limit or more along the lines of "buy \$5 worth, get \$1 free."

Darcy Freedman, an associate professor of applied social sciences at Case Western Reserve University's Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods, has been studying food security for 15 years, including the use of government EBT cards at farmers' markets in both Ohio and South Carolina.

Over the course of her research, she noticed that SNAP recipients who were able to stretch their benefits to include more fresh produce often took advantage of the opportunity and reaped the physiological benefits.

**"People recognize the value of the healthier food and want to eat it, but often just don't have the money," she said. "The economic barrier is the primary barrier. When it can be removed, people will take advantage of resources. It's not lack of desire or taste – it really is a cost issue."**

FDPIR recipients are also seeing more nutritious foods being offered at distribution sites. A 2008 report to Congress notes that the average FDPIR package meets several of the nutritional benchmarks, including the recommended daily allowance for 19 essential nutrients.

More distribution sites have fresh or frozen produce options instead of canned only and the program has eliminated shortening from the list of options available. Steps are also being taken to make bison and other traditional foods available through distribution sites.

Even with the changes in federal assistance programs, the data over the years on health conditions related to food insecurity is hardly shocking to many in Indian Country.

"Just look at the diminishment of our ability to feed ourselves in terms of the health implications, especially diabetes and obesity," said Elizabeth Hoover.

A Micmac and Mohawk assistant professor of American and ethnic studies at Brown University, Hoover specializes in food sovereignty, or the right to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and the right for groups to define their own food and agriculture systems.

## USDA supplemental nutrition programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture offers several supplemental nutrition programs. Some of the more common ones, both among Native and non-Native families, are commonly referred to via acronyms.

**FDPIR:** Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. Also known as "commods," FDPIR participation is limited to low-income households with at least one enrolled citizen of a federally recognized Tribe that do not have easy access to a licensed SNAP vendor. Families must also live either on or near a reservation or in certain areas of Oklahoma.

**SNAP:** Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program. Formerly known as food stamps, SNAP is supplemental nutrition program available to low-income individuals and families. Participants receive their benefits monthly and can only use them at licensed vendors.

**WIC:** Women, Infants and Children. A supplemental food program that also provides nutrition education, health care referrals and breastfeeding resources for pregnant and nursing women, infants and children younger than 5 who are found to be at nutritional risk.

With many Tribes losing access to traditional food sources over the last two centuries, the connection between food insecurity and physical health in Indian Country comes as no surprise to her.

**Look at Tribes' traditional relationships to food and how it shows up in creation stories or clan systems," she said. "Those were very different relationships than what we see with the foods we're currently eating. It was thought about differently and cared for differently."**

*Lenzy Krehbiel-Burton's reporting on hunger and food insecurity was undertaken as a project for the Dennis A. Hunt Fund for Health Journalism and the National Health Journalism Fellowship, programs of the USC Annenberg Center for Health Journalism.*

## Siletz Community Dental Clinic

Contact the Siletz Community Dental Clinic if you experience dental pain or a dental emergency. The staff will do everything it can to see you as soon as reasonably possible.

Morning check-in time is Monday-Thursday from 8:30-9 a.m. and Friday from 10-10:30 a.m. Afternoon check-in time is Monday-Friday from 1-1:30 p.m.

from rural areas and those living within 185 percent of the poverty line.

Among the 17.5 million American households considered food insecure are 21 percent of all children nationwide.

The USDA's most recent report on food security among Native households, presented to Congress in January 2012, placed the food insecurity rate at about 23 percent. That figure was based on data collected between 2006 and 2008, before the Great Recession.

The newest report on household food insecurity available through the USDA does not include Native American, Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian families in its racial/ethnic breakdown.

Separately published data, including Native families' eligibility and participation rates in WIC, SNAP, FDPIR and the free and reduced school meal program, suggest that food insecurity in Indian Country has not dropped since the congressional study's initial presentation.



Courtesy photo by Lauren Ashley Locklear

Federal regulations over the school lunch program have changed in recent years, requiring cafeterias to serve Brennan Hunt and other students more produce and whole grains.

## More nutritionally effective assistance

In recent years, changes have been made to place a greater nutritional emphasis on food provided through government-funded nutrition programs.

Along with more whole grains and reduced sodium content, school cafeterias are now required to offer fruit options other than juice at lunch and a variety of vegetables through the course of a week.

A member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, Lauren Ashley Locklear participated in the free and reduced lunch program growing up in rural Robeson County, N.C. Her son, Brennan, started school in August and like most of his pre-kindergarten classmates, qualified for the program.

The changes on her son's cafeteria tray compared to the ones from her childhood caught her attention pretty quickly, but for a good reason.

**"Some (parents) find that as a downfall because the food has declined in taste, but it works and it ensures that every child gets the food that they need throughout the day," she said. "Brennan's not a big fan of some of it, but he doesn't really complain."**

For many SNAP and WIC recipients, increased access to nutritious food has come from a source close to home – the local farmers' market.

Provisions have been in place since the mid 1990s to allow farmers' markets to accept SNAP benefits. As of fall 2015, more than 8,500 farmers' markets nationwide now accept SNAP benefits, an increase of more than 75 percent over the last two decades.