

# IMPACT

University of Idaho  
Extension

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## Idaho Extension health and nutrition programs can decrease health care costs

### AT A GLANCE

University of Idaho Extension delivers effective health and nutrition programs that can decrease medical costs of Idahoans. These savings can be used to meet other state priorities.

### The Situation

Eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily and being physically active 2.5 hours or more per week are two healthy habits that can decrease incidence of chronic diseases (heart disease, certain cancers, and obesity) which, in turn, may help drive down health care costs. Nationally, approximately 23.5% of adults meet fruit and vegetable recommendations and 51.6% meet physical activity recommendations. Idahoans are slightly above the national average at 24.6% and 57.2%<sup>1</sup>(Figure 1).

### Our Response

University of Idaho Extension has developed and implemented programs and worked with numerous partners to address poor eating habits and lack of physical activity as a way to help decrease health care costs. Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Extension Educators are strategically located in Idaho to deliver these programs (Figure 2).

Examples of Health and Nutrition Programs and Partners:

#### Healthy Eating

- Eat Smart Idaho
- Healthy Habits
- Meal Time in Less Time
- Balanced Living

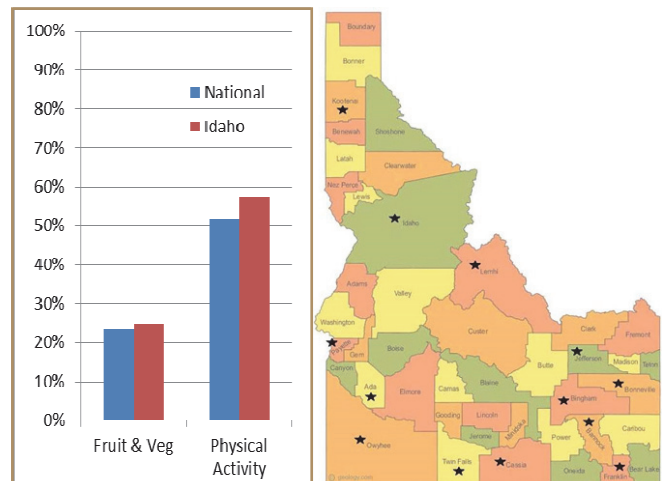


Figure 1. 2009-2011 CDC data. Figure 2. Location (\*) of FCS Extension health and nutrition programs.

- Seafood at its Best
  - Cooking with Whole Grains
  - Dietary Guidelines for Americans
  - Food Preparation Classes
  - Healthy Eating During the Holidays
  - Got Calcium?
  - Choose MyPlate
- Physical Activity** (Aerobic, Balance, and Strength-training programs)
- Fit and Fall Proof
  - Kick Your Boot Camp
  - Strength and Balance
  - Run/Walk for Fun Pedometer Fitness Challenge
  - Strong Women Programs: Stay Young, Strong Bones, Healthy Hearts

Partners assisting with these programs include:

- Food Banks
- Elementary, middle, and high schools
- Local Health Departments
- Farmers' Markets
- Emergency food assistance programs
- Community and school gardens
- Public health departments
- Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
- Health care centers
- Nursing and dietetic students
- Grocery Stores

### Program Outcomes

In 2013, nearly 44,000 Idahoans (approximately 16,000 youth and 28,000 adults) attended Extension classes that focused on eating healthy and being physically active.<sup>2</sup> Examples of how these classes can help participants **decrease their medical costs ANNUALLY in Idaho** include:

- If all Idahoans ate a healthier diet (more fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy foods), medical costs of \$355 million could be prevented.<sup>3</sup>
- Every Idahoan who eats unhealthy could have a diet-related health care cost of \$1,200.<sup>4</sup>
- Participants attending Extension classes on nutrition significantly increased their fruit and vegetable intake from 3 servings to 4.2 servings.<sup>5</sup> If all Idahoans would do this, it would save 150 lives and save \$25 million.<sup>6</sup>
- For every \$1 invested in nutrition and health education in Idaho, there is a potential \$14.55 savings in health care costs.<sup>7</sup>
- The average annual direct medical costs are \$1,019 for those who are regularly physically active compared with \$1,349 for those who report being inactive.<sup>8</sup>

### References

<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Sortable Stats-Risk Factors and Health Indicators (BRFSS), Available at: [http://wwwn.cdc.gov/sortablestats/Report\\_Docs/PDFDocs/FactSheets/ByState/SortableStatsByState\\_Idaho.pdf](http://wwwn.cdc.gov/sortablestats/Report_Docs/PDFDocs/FactSheets/ByState/SortableStatsByState_Idaho.pdf).

<sup>2</sup>University of Idaho, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Statewide Contact Summary by Team Report Year 2013.

<sup>3</sup>[https://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/nutrition\\_policy.html](https://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/nutrition_policy.html) Original statements was Healthier diets could prevent at least \$71 billion per year in medical costs. Calculation for Idaho = \$71,000,000,000 x 0.005 (based on Idaho having 0.5% of the US population) = \$355,000,000 or \$355 million.

<sup>4</sup>Cost of eating unhealthy corresponds to diet-related healthcare costs of \$393 billion/year or more than \$1200/year for every American (Rao M, Afshin A,

Singh G, et al. Do healthier foods and diet patterns cost more than less healthy options? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ Open* 2013; 3:e004277. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2013-004277, accessed at <http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/3/12/e004277.full.pdf+html>.

<sup>5</sup>Spencer et al. Effectiveness of the six-week Strong Women Stay Young Program, Available at: <http://ncsu.edu/ffci/publications/2012/v17-n2-2012-summer-fall/spencer-sant-hampton-lanting-liddil-lockard-peutz-wittman-woffinden-raidl.php>.

<sup>6</sup>Union of Concerned Citizens, The \$11 Trillion Reward: How Simple Dietary Changes Can Save Lives and Money and How We Get There. Published in August 2013. Available at: [http://www.ucsusa.org/food\\_and\\_agriculture/solutions/expand-healthy-food-access/11-trillion-reward.html#.VCWEhWB0yZ](http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_agriculture/solutions/expand-healthy-food-access/11-trillion-reward.html#.VCWEhWB0yZ). Original statement was: If Americans ate just one more serving of fruits or vegetables per day, this would save more than 30,000 lives and \$5 billion in medical costs each year (Union of Concerned Scientists). Calculation is 30,000 x 0.005 = 150 lives; \$5,000,000,000 x 0.005 = \$25,000,000 or \$25 million.

<sup>7</sup>McCawley, P. Eat Smart Idaho - healthy people, healthy communities. Available at [http://www.extension.uidaho.edu/impacts/Pdf\\_13/41-13pmccawley-eatsmart.pdf](http://www.extension.uidaho.edu/impacts/Pdf_13/41-13pmccawley-eatsmart.pdf).

<sup>8</sup>Pratt, Michael, M.D., et al. "Higher Direct Medical Costs Associated With Physical Inactivity." *The Physician and Sportsmedicine* 28(10). Oct. 2000.

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