

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION



BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

THE ISSUE

In Texas, 33-percent of the adult population is obese and 33-percent of youth (10 – 17 year olds) are either overweight or obese. Obesity increases the risk for diabetes, hypertension and poor overall quality of life. Moreover, health disparities among low income populations are well documented. Thus, individuals who live in poverty have dietary intakes that do not meet the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans or MyPlate recommendations. An estimated one in six Texas families experience food insecurities, meaning that the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food is limited or uncertain.

The goal of the Better Living for Texans and the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) programs are to provide nutrition education that increases the likelihood of participants to make healthy food choices consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and Choose MyPlate.

THE RESPONSE

The Better Living for Texans program (BLT) is a nutrition education program available for adults and children that are eligible to receive SNAP benefits. Since Fiscal Year 1995, BLT has provided research-based nutrition education programs that help people make healthy meals, improve their physical fitness, grow their own foods, save money at the grocery store, and adopt better food safety habits.

Better Living for Texans is a cooperative endeavor between the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, and the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) that serves limited income families throughout Texas—offering classes at no cost to participants. Statewide, BLT receives over \$7-million each fiscal year for programming resources and materials, salaries, and benefits.

BLT VISION

Creating opportunities, changing lives

BLT MISSION

We provide research and evidence-based nutrition, health and wellness knowledge to empower individuals, families, and communities to make positive changes for healthier lives



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RESULTS

FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019, BLT REACHED:

- More than 774,500 adult and youth contacts (educational programs, health fairs, newsletters, etc.)
- More than 423,100 direct and indirect educational contacts
- 22,900 youth and adults completed multi-session programs focusing on a nutrition, physical activity, and gardening

Over 69% of the participants identified BLT as their first experience with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

More than nine out of ten participants would recommend the BLT program and would attend another BLT program.

Behavior impacts of participants completing BLT programs reported:

- Eating fruit two or more times a day increased from 37% before a BLT program to 61%
- Eating vegetables two or more times a day increased from 41% to 62%
- Half or more of their lunch and dinner plates were filled with vegetables and fruit increased from 37% to 58%
- More than 94% washed fruits and vegetables before eating or preparing
- Planning meals in advance rose from 40% to 61%; using a list when shopping increased from 52% to 73%; and comparing prices when shopping also increased from 62% to 81%
- Overall, participants increased being physically active for 30 minutes or longer by one day per week

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

- "I tried yogurt and strawberries; haven't stopped eating fruit since the first class."
- "I've made recipes that are very tasty and healthy."
- "I am making shopping lists, checking prices, and checking temperatures on meat."
- "I try to do exercise everyday for 20 - 30 minutes."



HELPING TEXANS BETTER THEIR LIVES

BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS FOCUS AREAS

1. Increase fruit and vegetable intake
2. Increase physical activity
3. Improving access to fruits and vegetables (gardening)
4. Food Safety
5. Food Resource Management (stretching food dollars)

The Better Living for Texans program is delivered across the state in more than 210 counties across the state of Texas. BLT Extension Agents and Nutrition Educators, County Extension Agents, and volunteers conduct adult and youth lesson-series that use pre, post and follow-up or retrospective evaluations to identify behavior changes individuals are making as a result of participating in the BLT program.

Program partnerships include local schools and educational agencies, local churches, libraries, community centers, parks and recreation programs, community agencies and organizations, low-income and transitional housing authorities, local food banks, pantries, and food distribution sites.

Visit BLT's website for more information about programs offered and contact information for your local County AgriLife Extension office.