

# Food & Health



The Idaho



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## Good Food for Good Health

**M**any of Idaho's most common chronic diseases are diet related including obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. The right diet can reduce a person's risk of getting these diseases. Or, if a person has already been diagnosed, help manage it effectively. Individuals who are food insecure are at higher risk of developing a chronic disease. The reason is simple: they don't have the resources to purchase nutrient dense foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables that are essential for maintaining good health.



More than 200,000 Idahoans are food insecure.

People who receive help from food banks often have significant health concerns:

**47%** have "fair" or "poor" health.



**33%** of households have at least one member with diabetes.

**58%** of households have one member with high blood pressure



**50%** have unpaid medical bills

**66%** have had to choose between buying food and paying for medicine



Based on Feeding America's Hunger in America 2014 survey

## Food Insecurity Affects Healthcare Costs

**H**ealthcare professionals are committed to improving the overall health of the community, improving patient care, and at the same time, lowering costs.



For people with diabetes, for example, a healthy diet is an essential part of the treatment plan and the only way to effectively manage the disease. Poor nutrition can lead to hospitalization. Over time it can contribute to frequent hospital readmissions and serious health complications that can be expensive to treat.

### Food Insecurity can:

- Increase the risk of developing a chronic disease such as diabetes
- Prevent effective chronic disease management
- Increase the likelihood of hospitalization
- Result in poorer patient outcomes and higher treatment costs

Based on article in 2014 issue of Health Affairs, by Dr. Hilary Seligman



## Partnering for a Healthier Community

For several years, The Idaho Foodbank has been focused on obtaining more fresh fruits and vegetables for distribution. Greater support from Idaho's agricultural community and an increase in the number of grocery stores participating in our Food Rescue program have pushed the percentage of donated food considered nutritious to greater than 80%.

Now, we are working in collaboration with healthcare partners to make it easier for Idahoans who are food insecure and have health issues to get the food they need to promote better health.

*“Stable access to nutritious food can help the people we serve before the medical bills start stacking up.”*

Karen Vauk, President and CEO, The Idaho Foodbank



### Screen and Refer

Participating healthcare organizations such as community clinics include food insecurity questions in their patient screening. If the need for food is indicated, the patient is referred to a local food pantry. Healthcare organizations with the physical space, can provide their own food pantry onsite.



### Feed and Screen

The Idaho Foodbank's Mobile Pantry program coordinates food distributions with community healthcare partners that sponsor free health assessments. Conducted by healthcare professionals at predetermined locations such as churches and community centers, the screenings can include blood pressure, BMI, cholesterol, diabetes – even flu vaccinations.



Genesis Community Health's Garden City Clinic is an integrated healthcare facility providing primary medical care, basic dental, mental health, specialty referral, and medication guidance to those who are uninsured and have a lower income. The clinic includes food insecurity questions in the patient intake forms. When there is a need for food assistance, staff refer patients to a mobile distribution, or the nearest food pantry location. As a member of the Garden City Collaborative, the clinic participates in healthcare "pop up" events that provide basic health screening and support services to local residents.



### Community Health Screenings

Conducted by students from the Health Sciences Department, the screenings take place at various community locations and are available to individuals at no charge. During the 2015-2016 school year, the Foodbank distributed food through its Mobile Pantry program at all 6 health screening events held by ISU.

#### Screenings Include:

- Basic Physical Exam/Assessment
- Depression & Alcohol Screening
- Oral/Dental Health Exam
- Nutrition Assessment & Education
- Flu Shots
- Hearing and Eye Screenings
- Testing for Blood Sugar levels, Cholesterol



## Childhood Hunger and Health Go Hand in Hand

Supported by a grant from the ConAgra Foods Foundation, the Foodbank led a year-long collaboration project to assess and address childhood hunger and food insecurity in Twin Falls County. The University of Idaho Extension Campus was a major partner

in this effort, as were numerous organizations dedicated to finding community-wide solutions to hunger.

Funding supported expansion of the Foodbank's Cooking Matters program, with eight six-week courses completed in the county. Grant funds also supported four existing School Pantries and two new School Pantry sites at Boys and Girls Club of Magic Valley in Buhl & Robert Stuart Middle School in Twin Falls.





## Looking Ahead Towards a Healthier Idaho

In July of 2016 the Idaho Medical Association, with sponsorship by the Idaho Academy of Family Physicians, and support from the Idaho Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics passed a resolution that recognizes hunger as a social determinant of health. The resolution also acknowledges The Idaho Foodbank as an important healthcare partner. Since this resolution was passed, healthcare professionals across Idaho have been encouraged to include hunger-related questions in patient screenings and offer the pantry referrals to those who need food assistance. This is an important step towards a healthier Idaho.

### More of What's Good For You

While more than 80% of the food distributed by the Foodbank is considered nutritious, efforts are underway to secure even more fresh produce donations for greater variety and availability, regardless of the season.

A unique collaborative agreement between food banks from Idaho, Washington, Oregon and California enables The Idaho Foodbank to acquire fresh fruits and vegetables in the winter months either through purchase, or the sharing of surplus food items.



*“Fresh fruits and vegetables can be some of the most expensive items in your grocery cart. This collaborative allows the hunger challenged to have access to this very important food group while stretching their food budget dollar.”*

Lynn Dill, Food Sourcing Manager, The Idaho Foodbank

### The Right Ingredients for Change



One of the chief barriers to adopting a healthy diet after cost, is a lack of knowledge about food preparation.

The Foodbank's Cooking Matters program combines nutrition education with hands-on cooking instructions. Ensuring that students follow the right recipe for a healthy diet is the job of the Foodbank's resident expert on nutrition, Alexa Appleman. A Registered Dietician Nutritionist (RDN), a Licensed Dietician (LD) and with a degree in culinary nutrition, Alexa is passionate about teaching people of all ages how to prepare food in ways that are healthy, delicious, and affordable

With Alexa's help, the Foodbank is working with healthcare providers to offer Cooking Matters programming and nutrition education to their patients who are food insecure. Family Medical Residency of Idaho, St. Luke's, and Southwest District Health have already hosted programs, some for patients with special dietary needs due to a chronic health



condition. Beyond the kitchen, a partnership with the Idaho State University's Dietetic Internship Program in Meridian, and Central District Health is providing in-store instruction on shopping for healthy foods on a budget to mothers who are participating in the federal Women Infants and Children's (WIC) food assistance program.

The Idaho Foodbank has nutrition educators at branch locations in Boise, Lewiston and Pocatello, as well as in the Magic Valley. Through their efforts along with a growing roster of healthcare partnerships, we are providing those in need with all the ingredients they need for a healthier life.