

# Knowledge of Healthy Eating Habits in Low-Income Environments and its Effect on the Food Habits of Adolescents

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Over the past two decades, the rates of food insecurity and obesity have significantly increased. While it may seem counterintuitive, food insecurity and obesity often coexist in an individual or family. This correlation is particularly evident in women and adolescents but findings differ based on age, ethnicity and household income. The obesity is particularly common in low-income environments due to the high price of healthy foods and low price of unhealthy foods and the inaccessibility of fresh produce. The lack of knowledge about living a healthy life style in parents and adolescents in low-income areas significantly contributes to rising obesity rates.

We distributed a questionnaire to adolescents of the youth group at the Bronx Bethany Church of Nazarene to serve as a pre-test. It asked questions about their eating habits prior to the six-week intervention. The pre-test questionnaire also assessed the frequency in which adolescents consume certain foods, such as fruits, vegetables and sugary snacks. The intervention consisted of a six-week class informing participants about healthy eating despite economical and locational restraints, reading nutrition labels, and the different food groups. Lastly, a post-test questionnaire similar to the pre-test was distributed. This will test how well participants retained information taught in the class and if it ultimately affected their eating habits.

We were unable to correlate the pre and post-test of individual participants because a different group of adolescents attended each nutrition class, with only 7 participants attending all. General trends noticed in the results were that an increased number of participants felt they had the power to change their eating habits after the intervention. In addition, participants found it easier to make healthy choices at home and in their communities after the classes, but there was not a significant improvement in their food choices in their schools.

Overall, these findings reveal that a six-week nutrition intervention empowered participants to make healthier eating decisions in their homes and communities.