

FALL 2020



NEWSLETTER

FOOD INSECURITY DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Everyone understands what it feels like to be hungry. It starts with the rumbling of our stomachs, then we get irritable. Next, it becomes hard to think straight. To feel better we eat something and are satisfied. However, forty million Americans face hunger every day. Being uncertain about where your next meal will come from is called food insecurity. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) defines it as a "situation that exists when people lack secure access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development, and an active and healthy life."

According to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), as of July this year, those with food insecurity climbed to 11 percent of adults in the United States. (By comparison, 8 million adults, or around 4 percent, did not have enough to eat in 2018.) This year, an estimated 54 million people in the U.S. will have food insecurity, which represents a major leap from 35 million people in 2019. According to Feeding America Network, the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization, Alabama has 1 out of 6 (16%) residents hungry and 1 out of 4 (25%) are children.

Food insecurity can lead to a host of health problems. People who are hungry are 2.9 times more likely to be in poor health and are more susceptible to chronic conditions like diabetes and hypertension. In addition, children who live in households that are food insecure are likely to be sick more often, recover from illness more slowly, and are hospitalized more frequently. Lack of adequate healthy food can impair a child's ability to concentrate and perform well in school and is linked to higher levels of behavioral and emotional problems from preschool through adolescence according to the Journal of American Academy of Pediatrics.

One way to target food insecurity is through public and private food assistance programs. Publicly funded programs such as the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP, formally known as "food stamps") and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provide funds for grocery

items obtained at various supermarkets. Privately funded programs provide groceries or meals directly to clients through mostly nonprofit organizations.

Most of us experience hunger as a temporary sensation, and the solution is to get more food, however there are people who don't have enough food. Share our Strength operates the No Kid Hungry, a national campaign to fight hunger, and the USDA developed an interactive map to assist families in finding meals, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. In Alabama, End Child Hunger in Alabama, or ECHA, an outreach initiative led by Auburn University's Hunger Solutions Institute has created a County Food Guide Project that provides an interactive map listing county food resources. This food guide is updated on a regular basis by volunteers and community partners.

Those who are experiencing food insecurity or know of others who are fighting hunger please visit the national No Kid Hungry website at <https://www.nokidhungry.org/find-free-meals>. Also view the new statewide ECHA website at <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/npa/food-access.html>.



POWER UP WITH NUTRITIOUS SNACKS



It's 3:00 in the afternoon. The kids come rushing into the house, simply starving for an afternoon snack. You want to give them something quick and easy that nourishes their growing bodies and tide them over until dinner! In fact, you're feeling hungry and tired yourself. Lunch just doesn't always hold us over until dinner. No need to fear! A perfect power snack is exactly what you need!

What makes the difference between a regular snack and a "power snack"? The secret to a power snack is the combination of carbohydrate and protein. This perfect combination gives our bodies the energy needed to get over that afternoon slump. Let's look at carbohydrates first. They are our bodies' "preferred" source of fuel because they are easy to break down into glucose and are absorbed into our bloodstreams more quickly than protein or fat. The second part of a power snack is protein. Protein prolongs the energy released from carbohydrate and delays the extreme blood sugar drop that often takes place when you eat carbohydrates alone. In other words, it helps your energy last longer.

For a nutritious power snack, select carbohydrates that are higher in fiber and lower in sugar. Choose healthy, lean protein snacks that are convenient.

Now it's your turn! The following charts provide a few suggestions to get you started. Pick two items, one from each list to make your nutritious power snack. Be creative and make it your own! Before you know it, you'll be a power-snack pro!

CHOOSE 1 CARBOHYDRATE		
Crackers	Dried fruit	Bell pepper
Grapes	Berries	Pita bread
Granola	Raw broccoli	Granola bar
Baby Carrots	Banana	Popcorn
Tortilla Chips	Sliced pear	Mini bagel
Apple slices	Tortilla	Dark chocolate squares
Pretzels	Whole wheat toast	Cereal

CHOOSE 1 PROTEIN		
Greek yogurt	Hummus	Hard-boiled egg
Almonds	Mixed nuts	Drinkable yogurt
Peanut butter	Low-sugar protein bar	Tofu
Peanuts	Low-sodium deli meat	String cheese
Milk	Low-sodium beef jerky	Edamame
Cheese cubes	Unsalted sunflower seeds	Roasted chickpeas
Cottage cheese	Leftover chicken	Walnuts

SELECT HEALTHY FAST FOOD



Healthy fast food? For most of us, the term "fast food" creates images of greasy bacon burgers, super-sized french fries, and crisp chicken tenders dunked into creamy special sauce. Our doctors tell us to avoid the temptation of fat, salt and sugar filled foods. Dieters call it their doom. Many of us see it as our "guilty pleasure," in other words eating something opposite of healthy.

On the contrary, eating at the local fast food joint does not mean we have to sabotage our healthy diet plans. The following are four simple guidelines for more nutritious fast-food selections:

1. Make food choices to include the five food groups. MyPlate food groups consist of fruits, vegetables, protein, dairy, and grains or starchy vegetables. Use MyPlate as a template. The goal is to look at the proportions of each food group on the plate. Ask yourself, "what can I do to adapt this meal to make it more like MyPlate?"

2. Check the Nutrient Content. Use the Nutrition Facts Label to see the nutrients present in the food options offered. Nutrition facts information is often available on the restaurant's website, too. In addition, most fast-food restaurants are required to post calories on their menus.

Aim for around 500 calories total per meal. Choose foods that are higher in fiber and lower in saturated fat and calories.

3. Modify your Meal, if necessary. Don't be afraid to ask if a meal item can be changed for you. Most of the time restaurants are more than happy to add and remove items from your order. (Note: adding items may include an extra charge!)

4. Enjoy Your Meal and Savor the Flavors. Eat slowly and enjoy the different tastes and textures. Doing this allows you to enjoy your food, and can help prevent overeating.

Try to consume healthy food options 80% of the time, and not as healthy options 20% of the time. This rule enables you to care for your health and get some of your favorite foods, too. For more information on how to swap out fast food for more nutritious choices check out <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/healthy-eating/healthier-fast-food.htm>.

EXERCISE COVID-19 SAFETY OUTDOORS

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic many of us are staying at home and sitting more than we usually do. However, it's very important for people of all ages and abilities to be as active as possible because there are benefits to physical activity. Regular physical activity benefits both the body and mind. Exercise improves bone and muscle strength and increases balance, flexibility, and fitness. It can reduce high blood pressure, help manage weight, reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and various cancers. By the way, these are all conditions that can increase susceptibility to COVID-19.

Taking physical activity outdoors such as visiting parks, trails, and open spaces can relieve stress, allow some fresh air, and keep you active. While these facilities and areas can offer health benefits, it is important that you follow the guidelines to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. When visiting parks, beaches, or recreational facilities protect yourself by practicing social distancing, washing hands often, and covering coughs and sneezes.

Six general safety guidelines for outdoor activity as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are the following:

1. Visit parks and recreation areas that are close to your home.
2. Don't visit crowded parks or campgrounds.
3. Carefully consider use of playgrounds, and help children follow guidelines.
4. Stay at least 6 feet away from people you don't live with.
5. Wear a mask.
6. Wash your hands often and don't share items with people you don't live with.

For detailed information on what to do for specific outdoor conditions such as parks, campgrounds, playgrounds, beaches and other recreational facilities go to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/visitors.html>.



PREDIABETES PREVENTION

One in ten Americans have diabetes. According to the Alabama Diabetes Program, prediabetes is a condition in which individuals have blood glucose or A1C levels higher than normal but not high enough to be classified as diabetes. Approximately 88 million American adults, more than 1 in 3, have prediabetes. Of those with prediabetes, more than 84% don't know they have it. Prediabetes puts you at increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. In Alabama, 37% of the adult population have prediabetes.



The American Diabetes Association (ADA) states these conditions can occur in people of all ages and races, however, diabetes is more common in African Americans, Hispanic, Native Americans, and Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders. Regardless of your age, race, or nationality, you may be at increased risk for diabetes or prediabetes.

If you have prediabetes, losing a small amount of weight, if you're overweight, and getting regular physical activity can lower your risk for developing type 2 diabetes. A small amount of weight loss means around 5% to 7% of your body weight, just 10 to 14 pounds for a 200-pound person. Regular physical activity means getting at least 150 minutes a week of brisk walking or a similar activity. That's just 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

November is National Diabetes Awareness Month. Diabetes cannot be cured, but it can be prevented. Learn how to prevent the disease and be aware of information regarding prediabetes. Take the online Prediabetes Risk Test administered by the CDC & ADA at <https://www.cdc.gov/prediabetes/takethetest/>.

In addition, view the printable flyer about Prediabetes by CDC to use for awareness for staff, parents, family or friends. <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pdfs/library/socialmedia/prediabetes-infographic.pdf>.

100 ALABAMA MILES CHALLENGE

Alabamians struggle with obesity, currently Alabama ranks seventh in the country with 36% of the adult population obese. In 2018, the state launched the 100 Alabama Miles Challenge to encourage people to get outdoors and be active.



This year's 100 AL Challenge kick-off began in March. The challenge provides all family members a specific goal that will help them jumpstart a healthy lifestyle while becoming more familiar with Alabama's parks and other wild areas. Connect with fellow Alabamians to walk, run, hike, bike, swim, paddle, ride or roll 100 miles this year. Be sure to include your local community recreational areas, trails and neighborhood greenways, too.

Check out their website to get information to plan your next trip, find events, and track your miles, activity, and the places you visit. You can also create teams and compete with friends, family and co-workers who are taking the challenge. As you log your miles and visit Alabama's amazing outdoor destinations collect electronic badges along the journey. Keep up on the latest news and announcements on the 100 AL Challenge Face Book and Instagram pages. Use #100ALMiles when you share your experiences on social media. See this website to register at <https://100alabamamiles.org/>.

"Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much" - Helen Keller



NEWS AND EVENTS

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL MONTH/ ALABAMA

<http://www.farmtoschool.org/our-work/farm-to-school-month>

<http://www.farmtoschool.org/our-network/Alabama>

NOVEMBER IS AMERICAN DIABETES MONTH/ NATIONAL DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH

<https://www.diabetes.org/community/american-diabetes-month>

<https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/diabetes/prevention.html>

ASAPHERD FALL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 15- 17, 2020

<https://www.asahperd.org/fall-conference-registration-information>

NATIONAL HANDWASHING WEEK- DECEMBER 1- 7, 2020

<https://nationaltoday.com/national-handwashing-awareness-week/#:~:text=National%20Handwashing%20Awareness%20Week%20%E2%80%93%20December%201%2D7%2C%202020>

AL FOOD BANKS & PANTRIES

The nation's food banks and pantries have reported a record growth in the number of people needing help, with an average increase of 60% using food banks across the nation. Between March and June this year, four out of ten people visiting food banks had not received food assistance before the pandemic.

A food bank is a non-profit organization that stores pounds of food to be delivered to local food programs, like a food pantry. The food offered is usually donated from local neighbors, retailers, grocery stores, and restaurants. A food pantry is a distribution center where families in need can receive the stored food. Most are supplied with food from a food bank and can feed hundreds of people per week.

According to Feeding America Network, around 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries in the nation provide food and services yearly. Currently, Alabama has eight food banks to ensure food is provided for those in need and over 350 food pantries to distribute the food. If you want to volunteer, give or receive food from AL food banks and pantries, check out this website for your local food bank: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank> and to find your local food pantry check out <https://www.foodpantries.org/st/alabama>.

