

CARVER COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT PROFILE

Food



Food is connected to the ways people choose to use the land and water and the effects these decisions have on the natural environment. Food also connects people in community. A wide variety of foods, from all cultures, can be enjoyed as part of an eating pattern that supports overall well-being.

National guidelines recommend that after the first six months, people eat a variety of foods high in nutrients, and limit food high in added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium. A healthy eating pattern including nutrient-rich foods like fruits and vegetables that is low in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium reduces the risk for heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and some cancers, and helps manage body weight. However, many people do not or cannot eat this way.



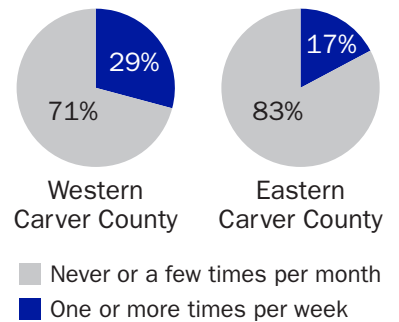
An individual's income and life circumstances can make it difficult to eat healthy foods, especially when these foods are not readily available or affordable. In the U.S., processed foods and beverages high in calories, added sugars, sodium, and added fats are cheap and readily available, while nutrient-rich fresh foods such as fruits and vegetables can be less available and less affordable.



Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is the lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle. Food insecurity is not one-size-fits-all and can be experienced in different ways. Examples of food insecurity include worrying about how to pay for the next meal, not having access to a grocery or corner store to purchase food, running out of food at the end of the month, skipping meals, or eating less expensive unhealthy food. 42% of Carver County residents living under 200% of the federal poverty level have worried about food running out in the past month. Additionally, residents in the western side of the county are more

Convenience Store or Gas Station Food Purchases



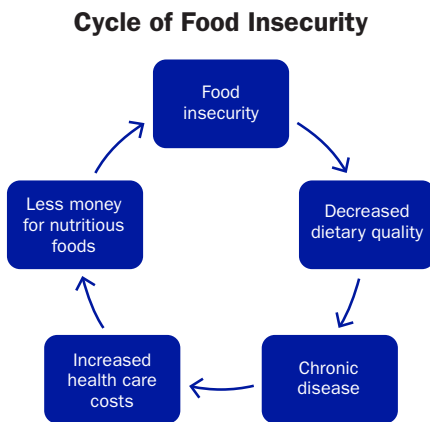
Source: Carver County Adult Health Survey, 2018

likely to purchase food from a convenience store or gas station, which are less likely to carry healthy food options and more expensive than a traditional grocery store.

Among Carver County food shelf clients, 61% have had a doctor or health practitioner tell the client or someone in their household that they have one or more health conditions.

Children who are food insecure are put at a serious disadvantage. Effects can be especially damaging during the first three years of life. Food insecure children are more likely to be hospitalized, have higher risks of health conditions, are more likely to have social and behavioral problems, and are more likely to struggle in school.

The cycle of food insecurity begins when an individual or family has limited access to and availability of healthy foods. Food insecurity leads to eating cheaper and less healthy foods, which contributes to chronic disease. Managing chronic disease leads to increased health care costs, which creates a financial burden, leaving less money to purchase healthy foods. This continues the cycle of food insecurity. Food insecure households are forced to make decisions between food and medicine, utilities, transportation and housing.



Compared to the state of Minnesota, Carver County has the highest rate of insecure individuals (60%) who do not qualify for federal nutrition assistance programs (e.g., SNAP, WIC, free and reduced lunch). Those who do not qualify must rely on charitable actions, such as food shelves, and/or purchase less healthy and cheaper foods to meet basic food needs.

Nutrition

- Only 27% of Carver County residents consume three or more servings of vegetables a day and only 22% consume three or more servings of fruit a day. Federal guidelines suggest the average adult consume at least four servings of vegetables and three servings of fruit a day.
- Men report eating fewer servings of fruit and vegetables than women.
- 70% of Carver County residents believe they eat enough fruits and vegetables to keep healthy.



References

- Minnesota Department of Health (2017). 2017 Minnesota Statewide Health Assessment. Produced in collaboration with the Healthy Minnesota Partnership. St. Paul, MN. <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/healthymnpartnership/docs/2017MNSStatewideHealthAssessment.pdf>
- 2017 Minnesota Food Shelf Client Survey (2018). Hunger Solutions Minnesota. Available at <http://www.hungersolutions.org/data-posts/food-shelves-see-record-number-of-visits-in-2017/>
- Child Hunger Facts (2017). Feeding America. Available at <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/child-hunger-facts.html>