

**Title of Intervention:** Black Churches United for Better Health

**Intervention Strategies:** Individual Education, Campaigns and Promotions, Group Education, Environments and Policies, Supportive Relationships

**Purpose of the Intervention:** To increase fruit and vegetable consumption in faith-based settings

**Population:** African American adults

**Setting:** African American churches in 10 rural counties located in eastern North Carolina

**Partners:** Community coalitions, churches, local grocers and farmers, Cooperative Extension Service

**Intervention Description:** This intervention lasted 20 months.

- Individual Education: Each intervention group member received personalized, tailored messages and feedback based on survey information regarding fruit and vegetable consumption, stages of change, barriers, beliefs and social support.
- Campaigns and Promotions: Monthly promotional packets were provided to each intervention church Nutrition Action Team. These packets included brochures, posters, banners, bulletin board materials, idea sheets and church bulletin inserts. Materials designed to promote locally grown produce, such as recipe cards, coupons and farmer's market posters, were distributed to church members and to local grocery stores. In addition to the planned interventions, churches conducted their own promotional events, such as 5-a-day Sunday, Gospelfests and youth-oriented events. Pastors were encouraged to promote the project "from the pulpit."
- Group Education: Nutrition Action Team members attended a 5-a-day training session, "Up Where We Belong," where they learned how to conduct activities in their churches. Participants attended group gardening sessions, educational classes, cookbook and recipe testing sessions. "Cooking With Pizzazz" focused on modifying cooking methods to meet 5-a-day guidelines. A trained cookbook chairperson from each intervention church assisted members in modifying their favorite recipes to meet the 5-a-day guidelines. The recipes were taste tested by members and included in a cookbook that was distributed to all members. The Cooperative Extension Service taught a master gardener program developed by and for church members. Classes on canning and freezing produce were conducted by Cooperative Extension Service agents.
- Environments and Policies: The churches adopted policies for serving more fruits and vegetables at church functions. Churches were encouraged to plant victory gardens and fruit trees.
- Supportive Relationships: Interventions activities were supported by lay health advisors and pastors. Church members identified as natural helpers attended bi-monthly training sessions on topics such as providing social support and helping members advance in the stages of change. Pastors were kept informed of all project activities and received a newsletter titled "The Body Temple." In addition, pastors reviewed educational materials and helped write and review tailored messages.

**Theory:** Stages of Change, Social Cognitive Theory, PRECEDE-PROCEED, Ecological Framework

**Resources Required:**

- Staff/Volunteers: Pastors, lay health advisors, church members, gardening experts
- Training: Not mentioned
- Technology: Not mentioned
- Space: Rooms for educational classes, grounds for gardens, access to kitchen space
- Budget: Not mentioned
- Intervention: Tailored messages, promotional packets, brochures, posters, banners, materials, idea sheets, inserts, recipe cards, coupons, training materials, gardening materials, cookbooks, newsletters
- Evaluation: Surveys, audit forms, attendance records, food recall form

**Evaluation:**

- Design: Randomized controlled trial
- Methods and Measures:

- Survey items included demographic characteristics, fruit and vegetable consumption, stage of change, knowledge of the number of servings recommended for good health, self-efficacy for eating five servings a day, and perceived availability of fruits and vegetables
- Three-day food records assess food intake
- Assessments were made of availability of fruits and vegetables at church functions
- Process measures included frequency of attending church during the previous year and to what extent each of the different types of intervention activities led to individuals consuming more fruits and vegetables

**Outcomes:**

- Short Term Impact: There were improvements in stages of change, self-efficacy, knowledge of the 5-a-day recommendation and perceived ability of providing fruits and vegetables at church.
- Long Term Impact: At the two-year follow-up, the intervention group consumed more servings of fruits and vegetables than the delayed intervention group. The largest increases were observed among people 66 years or older, those with education beyond high school, those widowed or divorced and those attending church frequently. The least improvement occurred among those aged 18-37 years and those who were single.

**Maintenance:** Each intervention county formed a coalition that included church members, local agency representatives, grocers and farmers. Coalitions received training and met regularly to plan community events

**Lessons Learned:** The institutional support and social networks of the church provided an effective avenue for diffusion of the 5-a-day message. Also, partnering with churches results in the potential for long term maintenance and institutionalization of the 5-a-day program within the church structure.

**Citation(s):**

Campbell, M. K., W. Demark-Wahnefried, et al. (1999). "Fruit and vegetable consumption and prevention of cancer: the Black Churches United for Better Health project." *Am J Public Health* 89(9): 1390-6.

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