

# Virtual cooking class improves children's nutrition knowledge

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Through 7.5 hours of live, virtual instruction over five consecutive weeks, children and families learn proper techniques for using knives, measuring, sautéing, roasting, and baking from a chef, while a dietitian focuses on nutrition and health benefits of specific food groups and nutrients, alone and in combination. Credit: Flint Families Cook

Amid parental concerns regarding poor nutrition and lack of cooking skills among youth in Flint, Michigan, a team of local dietitians, chefs, and researchers created *Flint Families Cook* during the COVID-19 pandemic, a program for families with children ages 8-18 years old, delivered virtually to children and families in their homes.

This addition to the great educational material (GEM) collection appearing in the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, published by Elsevier, reports that *Flint Families Cook* demonstrated success in reaching youth from families with low income and improving cooking self-efficacy, nutrition knowledge, and self-efficacy for consuming fruits and vegetables among young participants.

*Flint Families Cook*, co-facilitated by a chef and dietitian, encourages families to cook healthy meals together at home, using local ingredients. Through 7.5 hours of live, virtual instruction over five consecutive weeks, children and families learn proper techniques for using knives, measuring, sautéing, roasting, and baking from a chef, while a dietitian focuses on [nutrition](#) and health benefits of specific food groups and nutrients.

"One very important part of the class that is happening because of the virtual platform is that families are participating in the classes together as opposed to children participating in the class individually, apart from their family. We started to see parents becoming much more involved in

the education and sitting at the table once the meals were prepared for a family dinner," said Amy Saxe-Custack, Ph.D., MPH, RD, Department of Pediatrics and Human Development, Division of Public Health, Michigan State University-Hurley Children's Hospital Pediatric Public Health Initiative, Flint, MI, U.S..

The family-based, virtual format directly engages families in cooking healthy meals together and expands the program's reach to entire households, as well as extended [family](#) and friends. In addition to holding a growing waitlist of eager families, *Flint Families Cook* addresses challenges with preparing and consuming healthy foods at home. Such programming is feasible and attractive to communities with similar concerns about [child nutrition](#).

**More information:** Flint families cook: A virtual cooking and nutrition program for families, *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jneb.2022.01.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2022.01.002)

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