

# Adult food literacy program increases nutrition habits over time

September 11 2023

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Improving food literacy positively influences diet quality and reduces the risk of chronic diseases; however, interpreting the evidence of its effectiveness has been limited. Results of a [new study](#) in the *Journal of*

*Nutrition Education and Behavior*, have found that Foodbank Western Australia's Food Sensations for Adults (FSA) food literacy program is effective in producing positive changes across a range of food literacy and dietary behaviors in participants ages 18 and older.

Lead author Andrea Begley, DrPH, School of Population Health, Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia (WA), says, "Behavior change takes time to establish. Participants may be unable to change all [food literacy](#) and dietary behaviors quickly, so unsurprisingly, programs lasting more than five months were deemed the most effective."

This study tested the effectiveness of the FSA with a quasi-experimental design. Data were collected at the start and end of the program. The control group was recruited from adult volunteers and staff at the Foodbank WA warehouse in Perth and at a Foodbank WA promotion stall during a public exposition from August to October 2020. The FSA facilitators administered preprogram and postprogram questionnaires using an evaluation protocol to maintain consistency and ethical requirements. One-hundred twenty-eight [control group](#) participants completed the preprogram questionnaire and 80 completed the postprogram questionnaire. These responses were matched with FSA program participants (62.5% matched data).

Dr. Begley explains, "We hypothesized that FSA program participants who completed at least 75% of the program would report statistically significant improvements in food literacy behaviors and fruit and vegetable intake."

The FSA comprised four sessions of 150 minutes each. The curriculum was mapped out using the Australian Food Literacy and Context Model within four categories: planning and management, selection, preparation, and eating. All lesson content and resources were designed to be accessible to people with low literacy and were primarily pictorial.

While the FSA is a relatively short program, delivered over four weeks, researchers found it effective with demonstrated sustained behavioral change in line with other similar published programs.

The results indicated that the program group achieved statistically greater improvements in planning and management and preparation. The servings of vegetables significantly improved, as well. An increase in cooking confidence was measured, with improvements in other food literacy behaviors also noted.

Dr. Begley notes, "This study provides a valuable contribution to the literature to justify the funding of [food literacy](#) programs. The results are pertinent to government policymakers in decision-making for evidence-based public health investment."

**More information:** Andrea Begley et al, Determining the Effectiveness of an Adult Food Literacy Program Using a Matched Control Group, *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jneb.2023.06.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2023.06.001)

Provided by Elsevier

Citation: Adult food literacy program increases nutrition habits over time (2023, September 11) retrieved 21 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-09-adult-food-literacy-nutrition-habits.html>

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