

Food service 'allows physicians to prescribe a healthy diet'

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For the past five years, Advocate Health Care has provided patients with fresh fruit, vegetables and protein out of its Calumet Heights and Hazel Crest, Illinois, hospitals as part of its Food Pharmacy.

The program, designed to improve the diets for [patients](#) who either struggle to access [fresh food](#) or have long neglected to incorporate produce in their diet, is expanding to Advocate Christ Medical Center in Oak Lawn.

"Our risk for dementia goes down; our risk for hyper pressure and diabetes goes down; our risk for cancer goes down; all by simply making dietary changes," Dr. Tony Hampton, chair-elect of the Advocate Health Midwest Medical Group, said at a kickoff news conference recently.

Twice a month, patients from the Oak Lawn community will be able to come to the Oak Lawn hospital campus and pick up bags and boxes of fresh fruits and vegetables, some canned foods and the occasional meat-based protein source.

Last Tuesday marked the beginning of the program at the Oak Lawn location, and patients who signed up received a special Thanksgiving order including cauliflower, apples, leafy greens, canned soup, yams and a large turkey.

"Eating healthy is very expensive," said Cecile Mays, of Chicago Heights, a patient in the Advocate Health Care system. "I love the program so much I volunteer now."

The program has offered food to 11,000 different people in the past five years.

Officials say the mission is to reduce [health problems](#) by facilitating healthy diets, which experts say greatly affects human health.

"Whether these patients were dealing with diabetes or [cardiovascular disease](#) or other [chronic conditions](#), they (need) to have a healthy diet to really see significant progress," said Moody Chisholm, president of

Advocate Christ Hospital and Advocate South Chicagoland Patient Service Area. "And that's what this program was born out of: allowing our physicians to prescribe a [healthy diet](#)."

Patients must be referred by a provider with Advocate Health in order to be invited to the twice monthly food distributions. The food boxes, provided at a drive-through on the hospital's campus, also provides patients with literature on nutrition and recipes.

While a referral is required, Advocate Health's news release says any patient in need who would benefit from more healthy food is eligible to join the program.

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