



ONEIDA COUNTY
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March 14, 2019

Oneida County Aims to Improve Healthy Eating Habits *Health Department's Main Focus for National Nutrition Month*

The Oneida County Health Department is using National Nutrition Month to focus on improving the healthy eating habits of county residents.

According to a recent New York State Department of Health Risk Assessment Survey, 31.5 percent of Oneida County residents said they consume no daily fruits or vegetables, which is in line with the statewide average of 31.2 percent of responding adults.

“Average is fine, but we can do better and we’re continuing to work on it,” said Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr. “We are always striving for excellence for the residents of Oneida County, especially when it comes to their health and wellbeing.”

Eating a diet with a high concentration of fruits and vegetables is recommended to reduce the risk of many chronic illnesses, such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, many cancers and obesity. Recommended dietary guidelines include filling half of your plate with whole fruits and a variety of vegetables, as well as whole grains, low or fat-free dairy products and choosing beverages and foods with less sugar, sodium and saturated fats.

“The more plates we fill with healthy foods, the further we move toward preventing disease and chronic illness into the future,” said Oneida County Director of Health Phyllis D. Ellis, BSN, MS, F.A.C.H.E. “Our aim is to not only educate and encourage residents to make healthy eating choices, but to also increase access to healthy foods, which often means removing the obstacles that prevent people from getting the nutritious foods they need.”

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Oneida County continues to champion a variety of nutrition initiatives including:

- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, which connect local farmers and area worksites and allows farmers to bring their produce directly to area workplaces during growing season, giving employees access to quality, fresh produce at their workplace.
- Accessible healthy foods in small and independent markets, which include making fresh fruits and vegetables more visible, easier to find and attractive to customers in underserved areas with limited access to affordable fresh and healthy foods.
- Healthy snack policies and guidelines for pre-school, school-age and senior residents including recent programs at the Erwin Library and Dodge-Pratt-Northam Community Center in Boonville, educating staff on setting guidelines for nutritious food options for various populations.
- Healthy cafeteria options and nutrition information at the Masonic Care Community in Utica, providing residents, staff and guests access to lower calorie and higher nutrient choices as well as information educating about what makes a healthier food choice.
- The Oneida County Public Market, which has offered a year-round produce market since 2011 in what was previously considered a food desert in downtown Utica. The market continues to expand its fresh produce offerings and accepts Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants and Children's (WIC) food benefits. The market at Union Station is open for winter hours through April on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., and every Saturday during summer hours beginning in May.

In addition, Ellis said the Oneida County Health Department established its own healthy meetings policy last year, setting guidelines for providing lower calorie foods, smaller portions, fruits and vegetables whenever possible and healthier beverage choices at all meetings and events. Any business, school or community organization can adopt its own healthy meetings guidelines to set an example in the workplace that may influence healthier food choices and behaviors at home as well.

For more information on recommended dietary guidelines, visit:
choosemyplate.gov/dietary-guidelines.