Unhealthy eating, along with physical inactivity, is one of the most important risk factors for chronic disease in the United States. A study in 2013 estimated that more than 900,000 deaths annually could be attributed to poor diet and physical inactivity. Unhealthy eating, combined with physical inactivity, contributes to the development of obesity and chronic diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, osteoporosis and certain cancers. Since the late 1970s, the prevalence of overweight and obesity in the United States has nearly doubled in adults, more than doubled in children and more than tripled in adolescents.

**Key facts about nutrition**

Overweight and obesity has increased in adults and children. Breastfeeding initiation among Dakota County infants is high, but only 41 percent of infants in Minnesota are still breastfed at 12 months. Fewer than one-fourth of Dakota County students consumed fruits or vegetables five or more times per day in the previous week. Milk consumption has decreased in 9th graders. Pop or soda intake has dropped, but a large percentage of Dakota County students drink other sugar-sweetened beverages. Fewer people have adequate access to food.

**Overweight and obesity**

- About 35 percent of Dakota County adults (25 and older) are considered overweight (but not obese) and about 28 percent are considered obese. The obesity rate does not differ significantly from Minnesota, but is below the Healthy People 2020 goal for obesity in adults (30.5 percent).
- Among children ages 2-5 enrolled in Dakota County WIC in 2015, 12 percent had a body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to the 95th percentile for their age. This is similar to the rate for WIC enrollees in the state but higher than the Healthy People 2020 goal for children ages 2-5 (nine percent).

**Infant nutrition**

- In 2015, among Dakota County babies for whom breastfeeding status could be determined, 92 percent were breastfeeding upon discharge from the hospital.
- Sixty-six percent of all Minnesota babies born in 2013 were still breastfed at six months, above the Healthy People 2020 goal of 61 percent. Only 31 percent were exclusively breastfed at six months. Forty percent of infants served by Dakota County WIC who were born in 2014 were still breastfed at six months.
- Forty-one percent of all Minnesota babies born in 2013 were still breastfed at 12 months, above the Healthy People 2020 goal of 34 percent. Twenty percent of infants served by Dakota County WIC who were born in 2014 were still breastfed at 12 months.
Fruit and vegetables

- In 2014, 31 percent of Dakota County adults (25 and older) reported eating five or more fruits and vegetables the previous day. Adults in six metro counties (Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington) were above this percent overall (34 percent).
- Fewer than one-fourth of Dakota County students reported consuming fruits or vegetables (including fruit juice) five or more times per day in the previous week (2016 percents – 5th grade: 25 percent, 8th grade: 19 percent, 9th grade: 19 percent, and 11th grade: 18 percent).

Milk and other beverages

- In Dakota County, the percent of students who drank three or more glasses of milk the previous day decreased for 9th graders from 34.5 percent in 2001 to 27 percent in 2016.
- Males reported more milk consumption than females. From 2010 to 2016, the percentage who drank three or more glasses of milk in the previous day decreased by six percentage points for 9th grade females, and by four percentage points for 9th grade males.
- The percent of Dakota County students who drank one or more cans, bottles or glasses of pop or soda the previous day decreased in 9th graders from 65 percent in 2001 to 37 percent in 2016.
- While the consumption of pop has decreased, 63 percent of Dakota County 9th graders reported drinking one or more cans, bottles or glasses per day of other types of sugar-sweetened drinks (including sports drinks, energy drinks, sweet teas, lemonade, juice drinks and coffee drinks).

Inadequate access to food (food insecurity)

- An estimated eight percent of the population of Dakota County were food insecure in 2014. An estimated 13 percent of Dakota County children were food insecure.
- The percent of Dakota County households accessing food stamps or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (six percent) is slightly lower than the state (nine percent) in 2015. It steadily increased from 2008 to 2013, but dropped slightly in 2014.
- In Dakota County, the number of WIC recipients decreased by six percent from 2013 to 2015.
- During the 2015-16 school year, 28 percent of students in Dakota County public and charter schools received free or reduced-price lunches. Although this is lower than the state as a whole (38 percent), this percent increased steadily from 17 percent in the 2006-07 school year. It remained relatively stable from 2014 to 2016.

About this Community Health Profile
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For more information:
- Minnesota Department of Health www.health.state.mn.us
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) www.cdc.gov/nutrition/index.html
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) www.usda.gov

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