

Increasing Nutrition Awareness in Philadelphia's Asian Community

Steve Shive

At A Glance

As of September 2016, more than 144,000 Asian American residents, including low-income populations, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, have increased access to healthy food and nutrition information. Led by Temple University's Center for Asian Health (CAH), 10 Asian supermarkets and 44 community organizations partnered to educate shoppers about excess sodium and unhealthy oils often found in traditional Asian cuisine and to encourage healthier choices. The stores shared healthy food messages and hosted food tastings to promote the initiative.



Public Health Challenge

Traditional Asian dishes often contain high levels of sodium, unhealthy oils, and low levels of fiber which may put Asians at risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke. CDC data show that heart disease and stroke are the number 2 and 3 leading causes of death for Asian Americans. The American Heart Association found in 2016 that Asian

Americans die at an earlier age from stroke compared to non-Hispanic white Americans. In addition, Asian American children have higher total cholesterol than non-Hispanic white and Hispanic children, according to CDC data. Asian Americans can prevent or manage these health risks by changing how they cook and what they eat.

Find Out More

Initiatives like the IDEAL program at Temple University's CAH benefit greatly from community involvement. Sharing information about the program can help increase the visibility of nutrition information and improve health in Asian communities. For more information about CAH and the IDEAL program, visit <https://medicine.temple.edu/cah>. This project is supported by CDC's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) cooperative agreement.

I am very happy to join in this program. Everyone wants to eat healthier foods and the in-store nutrition message is really helpful.

- Mr. Berberabe
(Supermarket Owner)

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Approach

A CAH coalition of Asian supermarkets and community partners in Philadelphia's eight-county region collaborated on an educational campaign to inform shoppers about excess sodium and unhealthy oils found in some Asian foods. The initiative—IDEAL (Improving Diets with an Ecological Approach for Lifestyle)—encourages healthy eating among Asian Americans by promoting use of less sodium, healthier oils, and whole grains. The slogan "Less Salt, Better Oil, Whole Grain" appeared with healthy food messages in English, Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese, and was featured in local Asian grocery stores and in the facilities of community partners.

Results

CAH educated shoppers about healthier food choices, reaching more than 33,100 residents at 10 Asian supermarkets every week from 2014 to 2016. In addition to posting the signs, grocery stores hosted tasting events featuring healthier food choices. Store owners and managers themselves spoke with shoppers and spread the word. Community partners shared handouts and newsletters, and held community presentations promoting the healthy eating messages to 13,780 of their members. Through these efforts, Asian Americans in Philadelphia are better informed about how to choose healthier foods and prepare them in healthier ways.

What's Next

The strong relationships CAH built with community leaders and coalition members during the IDEAL initiative will help it grow in the future. CAH will use those relationships to partner with five more Asian supermarkets and 22 more community organizations in the greater Philadelphia Asian community. Through a collaboration with the Greater Philadelphia Asian Restaurant Association, more educational campaigns are in the works. The partnership will allow CAH to expand IDEAL to local restaurants, which will help increase access to healthier menu choices.