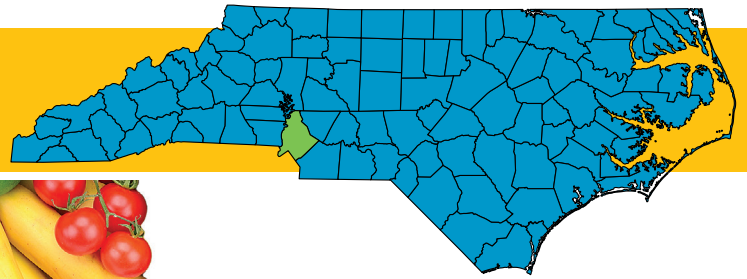




**EFNEP**  
EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION  
EDUCATION PROGRAM



## 2016 NC Cooperative Extension Mecklenburg County Report

### North Carolina's Challenges

- In North Carolina, **1 in 4** children live in poverty.
- North Carolina's adult obesity rate is currently **30%**.
- **15.2%** of 2- to 4-year-olds from low-income families are obese. This makes us the **7th** most obese state.
- North Carolina has the **18th** highest rate of diabetes and the **11th** highest rate of hypertension.

### Supporting North Carolina's Families with Greatest Needs Since 1969

EFNEP helps address the challenges limited resource families face when introducing healthy changes through nutrition education, cooking classes, physical activity strategies, and shopping on a limited budget. EFNEP provides:

- Peer-to-peer, hands-on education in the community
- Healthy, low-cost recipes
- Simple strategies to help families move more together



### EFNEP Reaches Diverse Audiences in Mecklenburg County

In 2016: **49** families enrolled in EFNEP  
**84%** of EFNEP participants enrolled in one or more food assistance programs.


### WHAT IS EFNEP?


EFNEP serves limited-resource families with young children, school-age youth, and pregnant teens through a series of lessons offered by paraprofessionals and volunteers, many of whom are indigenous to the population. In 2016, EFNEP served 45 counties in North Carolina. Participants learned how to:


- Make wise food choices
- Increase daily physical activity
- Manage food resources
- Practice food safety

### EFNEP Makes a Real Difference in Mecklenburg County

 **97%** of EFNEP participants improved dietary intake.

 **38%** now practice daily physical activity.

 **100%** practice better food resource management.

 **94%** have improved their food safety habits.

### Volunteers Strengthen EFNEP

In 2016, **14** adults and youth donated time to EFNEP, making a difference in their own communities and contributing to EFNEP's ongoing success.



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Mecklenburg County  
EFNEP programs obtained

\$1,099

in funding and support  
from local efforts.

## EFNEP SUCCESS



### Participant Makes Changes to Keep Food Safe

One EFNEP graduate in Mecklenburg County stated that since attending the program she stopped defrosting meat on the kitchen counter. Instead, she now thaws it in a refrigerator where a thermometer assures her that the temperature of her food stays below 40°. She feels thawing meat in this safe way has reduced bacterial growth and, in turn, the chances her children will experience a harmful foodborne illness.

#### References:

1. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/sodium/art-20045479>
2. [https://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@hcm/documents/downloadable/ucm\\_300625.pdf](https://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@hcm/documents/downloadable/ucm_300625.pdf)
3. [http://www.communityclinicalconnections.com/\\_downloads/CCCPH\\_FactSheet\\_HighBloodPressure\\_FINAL\\_Dec2015.pdf](http://www.communityclinicalconnections.com/_downloads/CCCPH_FactSheet_HighBloodPressure_FINAL_Dec2015.pdf)



### EFNEP Teaches Participant Skills to Help Lower Sodium Intake

The average American consumes 3,400 milligrams of sodium each day.<sup>1</sup> This exceeds the USDA recommendation of 1,500 to 2,300 milligrams a day. An elevated intake of sodium is a concern because it can cause the body to retain water. The water retained puts a burden on the heart and blood vessels as they work to push blood throughout the body, and that extra burden can cause a rise in blood pressure.<sup>2</sup> There are several health risks associated with high blood pressure. The two most frequently noted are heart disease or stroke.<sup>2</sup> In North Carolina, high blood pressure contributes to approximately 30% of all deaths each year.<sup>3</sup> Simply reducing the amount of sodium in the diet can reduce the risk.

A teaching objective of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) in Mecklenburg County is to help young moms to be more cognizant of their sodium intake. To achieve this objective, EFNEP first helps participants understand the health risks associated with a high sodium intake. It then teaches them how to reduce their intake through diet. Because 75% of our sodium comes from processed foods, families learn how to select fresh foods like fruits and vegetables that are naturally low in sodium. They also learn how to read the Nutrition Facts label so when shopping for canned, frozen or pre-packaged foods they can identify and select lower sodium products. Through in-class hands-on food preparation experiences, participants learn how to enhance the flavor of food by adding fresh or dried herbs and spices instead of salt from the shaker. And lastly, EFNEP teaches participants who frequently eat out how to recognize foods on the menu that are high in sodium and choose healthier alternatives.

At the end of one EFNEP series, a participant who had just experienced the tragic loss of a parent as a result of high blood pressure shared she enrolled in the program because she was determined lower the amount of sodium in her family's diet. She shared that because of what she learned in class, she now faithfully reads the Nutrition Facts on every label for sodium content and strives to purchase products that specify reduced or no salt added. She also prepares foods at home more often using recipes found in the EFNEP cookbook and practicing the salt-reducing tips offered in class. And, lastly, she selects foods for her family that are low in sodium when eating out. The knowledge gained and the skills mastered in EFNEP made her more proficient in shopping for and preparing healthy low-sodium foods for her family. By graduation, she could confidently say EFNEP had taught her how to lower her family's sodium intake.

This participant who had seen what the devastating health risks associated with high blood pressure can do was determined her family would not experience those risks. By adhering to the healthy living behaviors learned in EFNEP she not only learned herself, but also modeled for her family how to reduce sodium in their diets. She felt confident her efforts were helping to prevent her family's suffering caused by high blood pressure and its related health risks.

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