



Network for a Healthy California— Harvest of the Month

Overview

Harvest of the Month is an initiative of the California Department of Public Health that features nutrition education tools and resources to support healthy lifestyle habits like eating fruits and vegetables every day.

Why *Harvest of the Month*?

Research shows eating a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables and getting at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily can help children maintain good health, a healthy weight, and lower risk for other serious health problems. Nearly two out of five children in California are overweight or obese. Among very low-income families, more than half are overweight or obese. The extra weight can have a serious impact on children's health, putting them at higher risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain types of cancer. Of California children ages 9-11 years, only three of ten are eating the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables. Low-income children also have less access to nutrition lessons.

Goals

- Increase access to fruits and vegetables through school meal programs, farm-to-school programs, classrooms, school gardens, farmers' markets, grocery stores, community gardens, worksites, and other community-based locations.
- Increase consumers' preference for fruits and vegetables.
- Increase consumption of locally grown foods by connecting growers to their communities through farmers' markets, grocery stores, schools, and food banks, among others.
- Increase participation in daily physical activity and an understanding of why it is important to our health.
- Expand familiarity with California grown fruits and vegetables, local farmers, the state's rich agricultural bounty, and how food travels from the farm to our plates.

Who We Reach

- Low-income Californians, particularly families with students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12.
- School districts, food outlets (e.g., grocery stores), food banks, worksites, and local farmers in low-income census tracts, along with WIC offices, SNAP offices, local health departments, county offices of education, community health clinics, hospitals, daycare programs, public libraries, and other nutrition education and agricultural organizations.

Highlights

- Reaches nearly 1.5 million students (prekindergarten through grade 12) and 1.4 million adults* annually since 2004 with *Network* funds.
- Features Monthly Elements for 36 California grown fruits and vegetables.
- Supports "farm-to-fork" efforts by promoting partnerships with local growers and food retail stores.
- Used by multiple states and many organizations within California, including school districts, nonprofits, foundations, government entities, and corporate businesses.
- Has become a model approach to providing nutrition education to people of all ages.
- Provides award-winning posters to promote healthy behaviors like eating fruits and vegetables and being active every day.
- Can be used in conjunction with *Rethink Your Drink*, *Children's Power Play! Campaign*, *Retail Program*, *Worksite Program*, and *Physical Activity Integration*.
- Recognized statewide and nationally, including the Healthy U.S. School Challenges Gold and Silver Awards, *Let's Move! Child Care*, and the School Wellness Recognition Program sponsored by the American Cancer Society, California State PTA, and California Action for Healthy Kids.

*Numbers do not include people reached in *Harvest of the Month* programs outside of the *Network for a Healthy California*.

To learn more, visit www.harvestofthemonth.com

How Harvest of the Month Works

- Ready-to-go tools and resources can be used in diverse settings, including schools, daycare, afterschool programs, food outlets, farmers' markets, health clinics, hospitals, food banks, WIC programs, worksites, SNAP offices, and other venues for agriculture and nutrition education.
- Primary tools include four "Monthly Elements" – educator newsletters, multi-lingual family newsletters, bilingual community newsletters, and bilingual menu slick templates. While best used together, they may be used separately.
- Activities in the educator newsletters can be linked to the common core standards of education.
- Activities integrate "farm-to-fork" by teaching how food travels from the farm to our plates.
- Knowledge- and skill-based strategies are standardized, replicable, cost-effective, and convenient to use by programs and organizations of all sizes.
- All tools use the Social Ecological Model as a framework so they are suitable for individuals, families, institutions, and the community.
- Opportunities for collaboration among schools, foodservice, grocery stores, farmers, worksites, health and education organizations, among others.
- All resources incorporate USDA's ChooseMyPlate messaging.

Harvest of the Month Components

As a web-based resource, all *Harvest of the Month* components (including these) can be downloaded at no cost from www.harvestofthemonth.com.

- 36 Educator Newsletters
- 36 Family Newsletters in 6 languages (English, Spanish, Chinese, Hmong, Vietnamese, Russian)
- 36 Community Newsletters in English & Spanish
- 36 Menu Slicks in English & Spanish
- Links to the common core standards
- Farm-to-School and School Garden resources
- Training materials
- Kid-friendly posters and other promotional items (e.g., stickers, pencils, etc.)
- Templates: Press Releases, Event Flyers, Letterhead, Calendars, Graphic Organizers
- Student Assessment Tools

Evidence-Based Research

- All components are based on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of Health and Human Services' *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.
- Educational content is thoroughly researched from multiple reputable resources, including the California Department of Education, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, United States Department of Agriculture, and California Department of Food and Agriculture.

What People Say About Harvest of the Month

- *This has been one of the BEST programs that we have had in all of the years that I have been in education, which is a lot of years!* – **Elementary School Teacher**
- *Now I see [kids] checking the labels of the food and milk from the cafeteria. They enjoy tasting foods that they have not tried before. They are more aware of what they should do to improve their eating habits—and are passing the information on to their families.* – **School Principal**
- *My son has been telling me about the many fruits and vegetables he tries at school. When we go to the grocery store, it's an educational experience. We discuss whatever we see. I can't believe he's so willing to try new fruits and vegetables. It's fun for us to cook and eat them together.* – **Parent**

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