

Food and Health

Information from MCE's 2014 St. Louis Regional Food Study



Overall, we are eating more food than previous generations and still getting less nutrition. As our food choices have moved toward convenience over freshness and quality, our region's food and health has suffered.

- National trends in food consumption have moved more toward convenience foods – processed, pre-made, and often containing a number of additives, as well as more salt, fat and sugar. As a result, we over-consume sugars and meats while under-consuming vegetables, whole fruits, and whole grains.
- We over-consume the suggested limit of added caloric sweeteners by 300%, which is found in sugary deserts, candies, and sodas. Residents in the Saint Louis Regional Foodshed consume between 65 and 70 gallons of soda and soft drinks per person per year.
- As a region, we eat the recommended servings of vegetables, however it is likely that potatoes comprise the majority of those vegetable options in the form of processed potato products rather than leafy greens and other colorful vegetables, especially when price is a factor. For most of the Saint Louis Regional Foodshed, leafy green vegetables are 60 percent more expensive than starchy vegetables.
- Our rates of obesity and diabetes reflect our food consumption. In 2009, 9.5 percent of the Foodshed's population was diabetic. The highest percentage of adults diagnosed with diabetes was in St. Louis City at 11.8 percent. Overall, 30.4 percent of the total Foodshed population is obese.
- The highest rates of obesity and diabetes also coincide with areas that have few fresh food grocery stores. In these areas, convenience stores or fast-food restaurants are often the sole purveyors of food items.

Consult moenviron.org for citations and the complete STL Regional Food Study

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How Do We Improve?

Fresh and Local

Limited fresh food access is at the heart of our region's health issues. By increasing the amount of fresh food stores and markets in the region, especially in urban and rural areas, more residents can have access to healthy food.

Affordable Options

Accessibility is only half the battle. We need to ensure that fresh food just as affordable as inexpensive processed foods. Sourcing fruits and vegetables locally will help cut transportation costs and build relationships between farmers and stores.

Health Partnerships

Our region's high rates of obesity and diabetes link the food and health communities. By partnering with hospitals and medical professionals, food producers can create healthier products for all residents.