



Dietetics and nutrition epidemiology

with Dr Jeannette Beasley

Talking points

Knowledge & Comprehension

1. How many people in the US live in 'food deserts'?
2. What is a food desert, and why are they a problem?
3. What are chronic diseases?
4. How does diet impact chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease?

Application

5. What is the difference between dietetics and nutrition epidemiology? What issues does each profession tackle?
6. Jeannette highlights the importance of protein for people as they get older. What advice would you give an older relative about what they could eat to increase their protein intake?

Analysis

7. Questionnaires form a substantial part of dietetics and nutrition epidemiology research. What do you think are the benefits and some of the potential weaknesses of data sourced from questionnaires?
8. "Disease risks can vary hugely across different cultures and socioeconomic contexts," says Jeannette. Why do you think this is the case?

Evaluation

9. Misinformation about food and nutrition is an ongoing problem. Why do you think this is? What approaches could help address it?
10. What do you think is the role of policy and government in addressing nutrition issues in a nation's population? What is a good balance between regulation and letting people eat what they like?

Activity

Choose one of the fictional participants below:

Participant A is a teenager who eats fast food three times a week and drinks sugary beverages daily. They never eat breakfast and play video games for hours every day.

Focus: Growth, energy needs, preventing early obesity risk

Challenges: High added sugar, low fibre, low physical activity

Participant B is middle-aged and works long hours, so they have limited time for cooking. They have a family history of type 2 diabetes, and are overweight and sedentary.

Focus: Preventing chronic disease e.g., type 2 diabetes

Challenges: Convenience foods, high salt, low whole grains

Participant C is elderly, lives alone and has limited income. They live in a food desert and have limited mobility, mild muscle loss and high blood pressure.

Focus: Maintaining muscle mass, mobility, cardiovascular health

Challenges: Low protein intake, food access, cardiovascular risk

Design a lifestyle recommendations programme for your chosen participant based on what we know from nutrition research about diet and disease prevention. Your programme should focus on diet and physical exercise, being mindful of your participant's focus and challenges.

Keep in mind the following:

- How can you make your programme engaging?
- How can you keep your chosen participant motivated?
- How can you make sure your recommendations are realistic?
- How can you measure progress? For example, what health indicators or behaviours might improve over time?

Compare your programme with that of someone who chose a different participant and exchange feedback with them.

More resources

- This article from New Food explores some of Jeannette's research into the effects of plant-based diets on children: newfoodmagazine.com/news/259593/health-benefits-and-risks-of-plant-based-diets-for-children/
- The US National Diabetes Prevention Program website gives an insight into how research leads to community engagement: diabetes.org/about-diabetes/diabetes-prevention/dpp
- The BRIDGE website shares more information about Jeannette's ongoing work: wp.nyu.edu/bridgedpp