

ARS National Research Program on Obesity

Obesity is a growing epidemic in the United States that is leading to spiraling health problems and rapidly rising health care costs. ARS has unique expertise and facilities to carry out a cohesive research program on obesity prevention and energy metabolism, both through its national program in Human Nutrition and in coordination with ARS crop and animal breeding and new product and food-processing research.

The agency's obesity research program rises from an interlocking tripod of research areas: learning what people eat, what the body needs, and how to modify what we eat to be more beneficial. Results from each of these areas influence research in the others. A major facet of the research program is finding ways to prevent obesity in people.

ARS's six human nutrition research centers are home to carefully controlled human studies as well as community studies, which provide information from diverse populations at various stages of growth and physiology. This special expertise forms a core capability of ARS's obesity and human nutrition program.

In addition, ARS scientists at other locations across the country focus on developing new foods and food ingredients that may help solve the obesity problem. Their goal is foods that farmers can competitively produce, with taste, texture, and flavor that consumers accept. These are critical factors that must go along with nutritional enhancement.

To leverage resources for obesity research, ARS partners with other agencies, from USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion to the Department of Health and Human Services' National Center for Health Statistics as well as many universities.

To further program coordination, ARS is developing a new obesity initiative that will build on the agency's capabilities to address the many facets of this growing problem. A particularly important facet will be conducting multicenter studies with adults and children to better understand biological factors underlying the propensity to gain weight and to test dietary and physical activity strategies to prevent unhealthy weight gain.

Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University
Boston, Massachusetts
www.ars.usda.gov/naa/hnrca

Children's Nutrition Research Center
Houston, Texas
www.ars.usda.gov/spa/cnrc

Western Human Nutrition Research Center
Davis, California
www.ars.usda.gov/pwa/davis/whnrc

Grand Forks Human Nutrition Research Center
Grand Forks, North Dakota
www.ars.usda.gov/npa/gfhnrc

Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center
Beltsville, Maryland
www.ars.usda.gov/ba/bhnrc

Lower Mississippi Delta Nutrition Intervention Research Initiative
Little Rock, Arkansas
www.ars.usda.gov/spa/littlerock/deltaniri

Arkansas Children's Nutrition Center
Little Rock, Arkansas
www.ars.usda.gov/spa/littlerock/acnc/

U.S. Plant, Soil and Nutrition Laboratory
Ithaca, New York
www.ars.usda.gov/naa/ithaca/uspsnl

Eastern Regional Research Center
Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania
www.ars.usda.gov/naa/errc

Southern Regional Research Center
New Orleans, Louisiana
www.ars.usda.gov/msa/srrc

Western Regional Research Center
Albany, California
www.ars.usda.gov/pwa/wrrc

National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research
Peoria, Illinois
www.ars.usda.gov/mwa/ncaur

Locations of ARS Centers Doing Research on Obesity

