

# Cochise County's Steps Program

*Encouraging healthy eating behaviors*



Arizona

## What is the public health problem?

Overweight and diabetes are major public health concerns in Cochise County. According to Steps Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data, among Arizona's Cochise County residents,

- About 73% reported that they eat fewer than five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, and 46% reported being physically inactive (2005\* BRFSS).
- Almost 35% reported being overweight, about 26% reported being obese, and nearly 8% reported having doctor-diagnosed diabetes (2006\* BRFSS).

## How Steps is responding

The Cochise County Steps Program implemented the Washington State Dairy Council's Healthy Habits for Life program—a 6-week intervention designed for women, who traditionally purchase and prepare foods for their families.

- Interactive slide shows are offered by trained health educators in a variety of community-based settings. Topics include physical activity and meal planning, including calorie counting, grocery shopping tips, and dietary journaling.
- Health educators also collaborate with local women's fitness clubs to offer monthly membership discounts to program participants.

## What is the impact?

- Participants' knowledge about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables daily increased by 17%.
- Participants reported eating more than three additional servings of vegetables and two more servings of fruits each week. Whole and 2% milk consumption decreased by 8% and 1%, respectively, and skim milk consumption increased by 9%.
- Among those who cooked with oils, 22% reported using more canola oil, and the use of shortening and butter decreased by 10% and 5%, respectively.

## Why this program is working

Evidence suggests that providing information and practical strategies related to good nutrition and meal preparation will lead to an increase in knowledge about healthy nutrition and an increase in healthy eating behaviors.<sup>†</sup>

\* Most recent data available

<sup>†</sup> <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/report/>