

# Creating a Culture of Food Health in Houston

We are tackling the problem of food insecurity, defined as not having enough food in the fridge and pantry, or inconsistent access to high-quality, nutritious foods, through initiatives that bolster greater food access and elevate the connection between dietary patterns and health.



- Food insecurity screening:** We incorporate food insecurity screenings into our efforts through two evidence-based questions, always with the goal of reducing food insecurities and freeing up purchasing dollars for other needs. Patients identified as food insecure receive support in applying for benefits, a referral to the Houston Food Bank and guidance on questions to ask for food pantry referral. Patients discharged from our hospitals with Community Resource Centers are provided with basic food care packages.
- Food distributions:** In collaboration with Wesley Community Center, food distribution occurs bi-monthly. To maintain sustainability, we utilize the Train-a-Trainer model and partner with the area's community groups to plan and manage the program.
- Increased access to food:** Through the Houston Food Bank's "Food for Change Food Rx" program, school-based clinic families who are educated by our dietitians on utilizing affordable whole foods in the daily diet to promote health and disease prevention, have access to at least 30 pounds of free fruits and vegetables plus additional whole foods twice a month.
- Culture of food health:** With a garden as a focal point, The Culture of Food Health at Clark Park supports the community in the broader efforts of educating on healthy eating habits and agricultural empowerment, while increasing opportunities for food access. The initiative offers access to locally grown produce, nutritional cooking demonstrations, and opportunities to gain agricultural skills for at-home gardening.
- Partnerships:** To increase access to fresh and affordable food throughout the community, Memorial Hermann forges partnerships amongst local entities that connect families with nutritional foods. We support Urban Harvest's "Double Up Houston" program, which doubles SNAP purchasing power. We support Wesley Community Center's healthy food program with additional personnel. We collaborate with Common Threads to provide youth with snack cooking demonstrations while enhancing nutritional literacy. We are always a willing partner to test the Houston Food Bank's initiatives to promote healthy food access.
- USDA's SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) enrollment:** SNAP provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of low-income families so they can purchase healthy food and move toward self-sufficiency. All of our programs provide access to Community Health Workers to assist people in enrolling for SNAP benefits.