

VT Fresh STRATEGIES



VT Fresh aims to increase access and improve availability of fruits and vegetables at community food shelves. The program model combines research and evidence based approaches to:

- 1) Help change the **FOOD ENVIRONMENT** in community food shelves by increasing the prominence, convenience and availability of fruits and vegetables.
- 2) Facilitate preference change and increase knowledge, awareness and skills for selecting and preparing these foods through **COOKING DEMOS** and **TASTE TESTS**.
- 3) Reinforce core nutrition messages and affect fruit and vegetable consumption decisions by improving **DISPLAYS, SIGNAGE** and **PROMOTIONS** of these products.

VT Fresh is inspired by evidence-based strategies from behavioral economics research on the psychology of fruit and vegetable consumption. Research has shown that modifying the food environment along with the use of certain strategies, displays and promotions can make it easier for people to make fruit and vegetable consumption decisions. Food shelves have the potential to increase knowledge and awareness about healthy foods and influence in-the-moment decision making regarding household food choices and consumption of healthy foods.

GOAL	SUPPORTING RESEARCH	STRATEGIES
<p>1</p> <p>IMPROVE THE VISIBILITY, PROMINENCE AND LAYOUT OF PRODUCE DISPLAYS</p>	<p>Making fruit and vegetables prominent and highly visible is one of the most important strategies for increasing their consumption.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Create beautiful / attractive and well organized displays. Combine with signage. ➤ Make displays prominent, highly visible, centrally located and easy to get to. Focus on front and center placement of produce at eye level. ➤ Take into consideration the appeal that “natural” has when creating displays and signage. Be inspired by local farmer’s market type displays. ➤ Display produce in attractive baskets, bowls or free standing containers. Consider having produce in 2 or more separate locations in the space for ‘repetitive exposure.’ ➤ Make produce appear more abundant and plentiful. Have different sizes of containers or keep bins looking full by placing crushed paper bags under produce to add bulk and lift. ➤ Develop systems to clean, sort produce, discard or remove spoiled items and improve presentation.
<p>2</p> <p>IMPROVE PROCUREMENT AND STORAGE TO INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY AND VARIETY OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES</p>	<p>People consume more fruits and vegetables when they have more options to choose from.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Make fruits and vegetables a larger share of food distributed. ➤ Increase the variety of choices by offering many different types of fruits and vegetables. ➤ Offer different forms – fresh, frozen, dried and canned. ➤ Improve storage capabilities. Use display coolers with glass doors for produce. Consider improving systems for root storage and winter crop storage. ➤ Improve systems to procure more fruits and vegetables. Consider additional pick-ups of produce from the VT Foodbank, engage staff and volunteers to glean from local farms and farmer’s markets, implement a grow-a-row program, etc. ➤ Consider adopting food policies and certain nutritional standards for purchased foods.

3
**INCREASE THE
 CONVENIENCE OF
 FRUIT AND
 VEGETABLES**

Convenience and accessibility is a significant predictor of fruit and vegetable consumption.

- Consider new and creative ways to schedule produce distribution days aimed at distributing produce in greater amounts. For example, combine community dinners with produce distribution and/or create other special produce distribution days or events.
- Pre-package/pre-bag single or family size servings of fruits and vegetables for added convenience, accessibility and appeal. Use familiar packaging materials you would find in the grocery store. For example, one food shelf found that packaging heads of lettuce in a 'lettuce bag' greatly increased distribution.
- Create 'snack packs' for easy grab-and-go.
- Use cross-merchandizing that places fruits and vegetable displays in other shopping areas such as cereals, pastas and soups. Bundle items together for healthier meals.
- Lightly process to better preserve and stabilize produce and add convenience.

4
**PROVIDE TIMELY
 REMINDERS AND
 POINT-OF-
 DECISION PROMPTS**

Many people are interested in opportunities to eat a little better, but they need to be reminded at the right time.

- Promote produce with signage, produce banners, posters and other printed materials. Consider large vibrant photos of fruits and vegetables, murals, and artwork.
- Consider using large arrows on plastic floor mats, walls or ceiling hangings pointing visitors towards the produce section.
- Use shelf labels or a color coding/ guiding star system as a quick visual cue that signals healthier choices.
- Place signs on shopping carts or baskets facing the shopper that remind them to choose and select fruits and vegetables. Provide a suggested amount. For example, "In this foodshelf, the majority of people choose at least 5 produce items." Another suggestion is to use yellow duct tape to divide shopping carts and baskets in half. Have shoppers put their fruits and vegetables in the front half of the cart.
- Feature a fruit or vegetable each day with special signage, fun facts and recipes highlighting why it is appealing, etc. Place signage in waiting areas, entrances, walkways, at check-in counters as a prompt.
- Display recipe cards near items you want to encourage.
- Emphasize the 'value' of the foods you want to encourage. Consider using labels that indicate value such as local, fresh, organic, quality, natural, etc.
- Provide training to staff and volunteers on ways to promote fruit and vegetable consumption with simple, personal messaging and encouragement. Remember we are greatly influenced by the people around us.

5
**ENHANCE TASTE
 EXPECTATIONS
 AND FACILITATE
 PREFERENCE
 CHANGE**

Up to ten taste tries may be needed to acquire a taste preference for new foods.

- Provide tastings and/or cooking demos to encourage consumption of different fruits and vegetables.
- Appeal to people's senses. Simply cooking a vegetable with sautéed garlic and onions can fill a space with a comforting and welcoming smell.
- Emphasize the presentation of the food using attractive plates and bowls and table cloths. Use fun or appealing names to suggest that the food is high quality and tastes great.



This document was designed by Michelle Wallace :: Director of Community Health and Fresh Food Initiatives :: Vermont Foodbank :: mwallace@vtfoodbank.org. Please request permission to use or adapt this resource.

Primary research source: Price, Joe and Riis, Jason. Behavioral Economics and the Psychology of Fruit and Vegetable Consumption: A Scientific Overview, Produce for Better Health Foundation, 2012.

Additional sources of inspiration include the Vermont Foodbank VT Fresh Program partners, Baltimore Healthy Stores Program, Feeding America Nudges Project and behavioral economics research by David Just at Cornell University.

**For PHOTOS and IDEAS go to the
 VT FRESH Pinterest web pages:**

www.bit.ly/vtdisplays

www.bit.ly/vtsignage