

Community Program Boosts Fitness, Health Education Among Latinos

The program encourages Latinos to make healthy lifestyle choices to lower their risk for chronic illnesses.

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The community-based health program “¡Coma, Muévase y Viva!” (Eat, Move and Live!) is helping Latino families in rural Southern California make lifestyle choices to improve health and quality of life, according to a [study by University of California](#) (UC) researchers.

The program includes trusted community health workers known as promotoras who deliver linguistically tailored interventions regarding diet, exercise and chronic disease management among low-income, [rural](#) Latino families.

“Our findings show that programs like ‘¡Coma, Muévase y Viva!’ can improve quality of life for underserved rural Latino populations,” said senior author of the study Ann Cheney, PhD, a professor of social medicine, population and public health in the UC Riverside School of Medicine, in a [news release](#). “By involving promotoras throughout the research process, we ensured the program was meaningful and relevant to participants’ daily lives.”

The 10-week virtual program aims to engage Latinos in healthy lifestyle choices associated with a lower risk for chronic illnesses and lasting positive health benefits.

Latino adults in the United States have a greater prevalence of [chronic illnesses](#), such as [high blood pressure](#), [obesity](#) and [diabetes](#), compared with other racial groups. What’s more, many U.S. Latinos face limited access to healthy foods, safe exercise spaces and health education delivered in Spanish.

To combat chronic illness and improve quality of life, “¡Coma, Muévase y Viva!” promotes health education, offers culturally familiar cooking demos and group exercise sessions. Weekly educational classes cover diabetes, nutrition, cholesterol and more.

“Programs like ‘¡Coma, Muévase y Viva!’ show that when communities lead the way, health education becomes more effective and empowering,” said Jacqueline Moreira, a program coordinator for research studies in the UCR Department of Social Medicine, Population, and Public Health, one of the study’s author. “This kind of collaboration supports healthy behavior change and strengthens community capacity to address health inequities.”

Published in [BMC Public Health](#), the study findings show that the program benefits participants in several ways. Many reported weight loss, increased energy and stronger confidence managing diabetes and obesity.

“By integrating local voices, cultural food traditions, and community networks, ‘¡Coma, Muévase y Viva!’ provides a model for how to deliver accessible, relevant and sustainable health education in underserved communities,” Moreira said.

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