

Father-Focused Program Boosts Healthy Eating in Latino Families

A culturally tailored nutrition program highlights Latino fathers, who are often leaders of behavior change within their families.

June 27, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

A father-led nutrition and physical activity program significantly improved [dietary](#) behaviors among Mexican-heritage families living in rural U.S. communities, according to a study published in the [Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior](#).

Latino adults in the United States have a greater prevalence of [chronic illnesses](#), such as [obesity](#) and [type 2 diabetes](#), compared with other racial groups. Healthy lifestyle choices, including diet, are associated with a lower risk for chronic illnesses and lasting positive health benefits.

¡Haz Espacio para Papi! (Make Room for Daddy!) is a six-week program that engaged nearly 59 families with children age 9 to 11 living in Texas border communities, according to a [news release](#).

Delivered by trained community health workers, the program included in-person group sessions, activities for home and interactive nutrition education. The program led to sustained increases in weekly fruit and vegetable intake as well as healthy behaviors, such as cooking at home, up to 2.5 years after the program ended.

Fathers with lower education levels had the greatest increase in vegetable intake, and older fathers consumed fewer vegetables compared with younger fathers.

Study authors note that only a limited number of nutrition programs include Latino fathers, who are often leaders of behavior change within their families.

“This study provides important evidence that culturally grounded programs centered on fathers can drive lasting dietary behavior change,” said lead study author Annika Vahk, PhD, in the news

release. “Fathers play a vital role in modeling and supporting healthy behaviors in Latino families, and programs like [¡Haz Espacio para Papi!] can help activate that influence.”

To read more, click [#Diet](#) or [#Healthy Eating](#). There, you’ll see headlines such as “[Gardening Program Gets Boost at Nebraska-Based Health Center](#),” “[Healthy Nutrition and Physical Lifestyle Choices Lower Cancer Mortality Risk for Survivors](#)” and “[Measuring Ultra-Processed Foods in Diet](#).”

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