



# SNAP Participants Appreciate Behavioral Science-Informed Nutrition Text Messages

Research Brief • September 2023

*“Oh my goodness. It just made me feel like they care so much. It made it personal for me... Like a more intimate relationship with CalFresh.”*

## BACKGROUND

SNAP participants report a desire to eat a healthier diet, yet most consume less than the amount of fruits and vegetables (FV) recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.<sup>1,2</sup> SNAP provides financial resources to support food purchases but does not typically provide nutrition information.

## WHAT WE DID



Hello from CalFresh and UC San Diego! Did you know kiwis have a sweet but unique flavor? Slice them and eat like an apple. YUM! You can even eat the skin! For recipes visit: [eat-ca.org/kiwi](http://eat-ca.org/kiwi)

Figure 1. Sample text message.

In collaboration with the UCSD Center for Community Health, we partnered with the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency to send 5 monthly behavioral science-informed nutrition text messages to approximately 170,000 SNAP (known as CalFresh in California) participants, between October 2020-February 2021. The text messages were sent in English and Spanish and provided information about the health and other benefits of California-grown FV. Each text message included a website link specific to the fruit or vegetable mentioned in the message. For example, participants that clicked on the website link in Figure 1 were automatically sent to the kiwi landing page shown in Figure 3. The website

included information about how to select, store, and prepare each FV, as well as budget-friendly recipes. This brief presents findings from an online follow-up survey with program participants (n=4,052).<sup>3</sup>

## KEY FINDINGS

Significant increases were found in knowing where to get information about selecting, storing, and preparing FV; feeling good about participating in SNAP; and perceptions that the SNAP program helps participants eat healthfully. No statistically significant pre-post differences were found in FV consumption, though most participants self-reported increased FV intake at follow up. Participants appreciated the information on the website, particularly the recipes.<sup>4</sup> Almost all respondents appreciated the intervention and wanted it to continue (Figure 2).

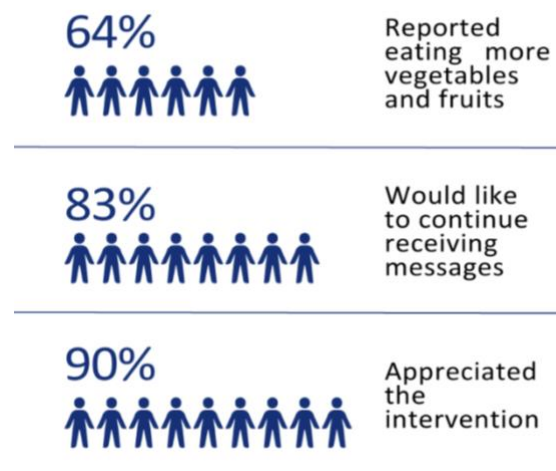


Figure 2. Select post-test survey results.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our findings indicate that a SNAP agency sending text messages with nutrition information is well-received and can improve diet and nutrition. Participants appreciated the intervention and many reported a desire to receive the text messages more frequently than once a month.<sup>4</sup> Broader adoption of this approach can provide more SNAP households with information promoting a healthy diet, while improving perceptions of the SNAP program.

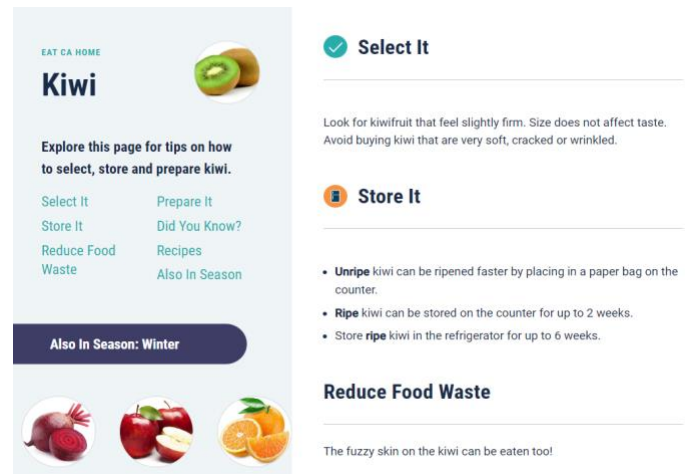


Figure 3. Kiwi page on project website, [eat-ca.org](https://eat-ca.org).

*“I think it's really amazing. They get you these foods that you should try and recipes and let you know what to eat and how much. I just think it's really important and I'm grateful for it.”*



The Nutrition Policy Institute conducts evaluations of USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—formerly known as the federal Food Stamp Program—the largest program offering nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families. Highlights of our research include: understanding SNAP incentives and/or restrictions on participants' food intake and evaluating various SNAP-Ed interventions.

### References:

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