

PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS & UPDATES

TEXAS RESEARCH-TO-POLICY COLLABORATION PROJECT

October 2025



Fall Back: Daylight Saving Time ends!



Texas Child Health Status Reports: Updated Reports Online!

The Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living updated our series of user-friendly materials to highlight child health in Texas using data from the Texas School Physical Activity and Nutrition (Texas SPAN) survey.

New report!

Healthy Children, Healthy State:

Ultra-Processed Food Consumption by Texas Children

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

TEXAS CHILDREN EAT A LOT OF ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS

Ultra-processed foods (UPFs) are industrial foods and beverages that are high in added sugar, salt, fat, or other additives like food coloring to improve taste, convenience, and shelf life. Soda, chips, packaged snacks, breakfast cereal, chicken nuggets, and hotdogs are common types of UPFs.^{1,2}

UPF Consumption in Texas Children

On a given school day:



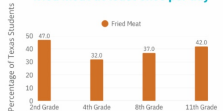
78% of school-aged children and adolescents in Texas consume at least one sugar-sweetened beverage.

- Sugar-sweetened beverages include regular sodas, coffees/teas with sugar, fruit-flavored drinks, flavored milk, and energy drinks.



39% of Texas children eat fried or processed meat (chicken, fish sticks, etc.) at least once a day.

Texas students who reported eating fried meat at least once per day



Why Should Children Limit UPF Intake

Among U.S. youth, over 60% of the total calories are from UPF. UPF intake is related to adverse health outcomes in children.³⁻⁶

- Higher risk for overweight and obesity
- Poor nutrition and overall diet quality
- Higher risk of mental health disorders
- Higher risk of asthma, wheezing, or other respiratory symptoms
- Higher risk of metabolic syndrome



91% of Texas children ate at least one sweet or salty snack (candy, frozen dessert, cakes, fries, or chips).

Texas students who reported eating sweet or salty snacks during the previous day



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TX RPC Project Health Policy Resource Reports

Dementia: Prevention & Care in Texas

Released September 8, 2025

Dementia: Prevention & Care in Texas

September 8, 2025

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Approximately half of dementia cases could be delayed or prevented by living a healthy lifestyle. People who face barriers like poor access to healthcare, education, and healthy food are at higher risk for dementia.
2. Lifestyle changes such as a healthy diet, being physically active, and social connectedness can help reduce dementia risk and support brain health across Texas communities.
3. Programs and policies that support healthy eating and active living in communities can help support brain healthy lifestyles.

Background

Dementia is a broad term to describe a severe decline in cognitive abilities, such as memory, that interfere with daily life activities. Dementia is most commonly due to diseases that cause gradual loss of brain tissue (neurodegeneration).¹

Dementia is increasingly recognized as a critical public health concern in Texas, which ranks **second in the nation** for Dementia disease-related deaths.²

Types of Dementia and Occurrence Percentage:³

Alzheimer's: 60-80%	Frontotemporal Dementia: 5-10%	Lewy Body Dementia: 5-10%	Vascular Dementia: 5-10%	Other: e.g., Parkinson's/ Huntington's: <5%
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Approximately 50% of Alzheimer's patients also show signs of vascular dementia.³

Lifestyle changes, such as healthy eating, physical exercise, socialization, and cognitive stimulation, can reduce the risk of dementia in older age by approximately 45%.^{4,5}

- Combining the Mediterranean Diet with heart-healthy nutrition - specifically limiting intake of red meat, butter, cheese, sweets, and fried foods - can reduce the risk of Alzheimer's by as much as 53%.^{6,7}
- Physical activity is associated with a 20% decreased risk of dementia.⁷
- Increasing mental stimulation and improving connections with friends and family to reduce loneliness could play a vital role in maintaining brain health and reducing cognitive decline.⁸
- Blood pressure and diabetes control, not smoking, getting adequate sleep, and avoiding head injuries are examples of additional behaviors that reduce the risk of dementia.⁹


\$53,500 per year
The average cost for caring for an individual with dementia, including direct medical care, long-term care, and the value of unpaid caregiving provided by families.¹⁰

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- Approximately half of dementia cases could be delayed or prevented by living a healthy lifestyle. People who face barriers like poor access to healthcare, education, and healthy foods are at higher risk for dementia.
- Lifestyle changes such as a healthy diet, being physically active, and social connectedness can help reduce dementia risk and support brain health across communities.
- Programs and policies that support healthy eating and active living in communities can help support brain-healthy lifestyles.

Upcoming Webinar



Nourishing Beginnings: Fueling Healthy Futures in the First 1,000 Days of Life

November 4, 2025, from 12:00 - 1:00pm CT

This webinar will explore the role of nutrition during the first 1,000 days of life help shape lifelong health, growth, and development.

The webinar will highlight:

- Data-driven strategies to support early nutrition education and guide families through the timely introduction of nutrient-rich complementary foods.
- Practical tools and resources to connect families with community and clinical programs that promote access to healthy, affordable options.
- Collaborative approaches to integrating nutrition-focused care into clinical practice and community outreach.

Register here

Past Webinars



upLIFT for Maternal Mental Health

October 29, 2025, from 11:00 - 12:00pm CT

This webinar explored the upLIFT program, a groundbreaking home visitation program designed to address maternal peripartum mood disorders and improve outcomes for both mothers and infants.

The webinar highlighted:

- The development journey of targeted home visitation strategies.
- The comprehensive upSTART integrated model for maternal and infant support.
- Practical steps for implementing effective mental health strategies in home settings.

[View the recording here](#)

Partner Resources

[Mapping Opportunities to Reduce Roadway Fatality and Serious Injury in Partnership with the Montopolis Community of Austin, Texas: Advancing Vision Zero via a Young Adult-Led Assessment of Road-Related Safety & Active Commuting](#)

Authors: Andrew Springer, Deb Salvo, et al.

Published March 31, 2025

High rates of road-related fatality and injury represent a major public health problem in Texas, with over 2,700 Austinites having been seriously injured or killed in traffic crashes in the past 5 years. Higher-risk areas for traffic crashes and injury in Austin include the Montopolis community, located in southeast Austin.

Findings from this report include:

- Montopolis experiences a higher rate of crashes compared to other Austin areas.
- Almost 78% of Austin road segments assessed had sidewalks, and 67% had road buffers.
- However, the need for improved community infrastructure includes crosswalks.
- Potential solutions to increase roadway safety and active commuting included promoting technological solutions to reduce distracted driving, increasing social influence among peers to reduce DUI, and enhancing roadway design and messaging.

[Read the full report here](#)

Resource Corner

The TX RPC Project develops accessible and accurate public health policy-related resources from field experts. Links to specific resource categories on our website can be found below:

[Texas
Legislative
Bill Tracker](#)

[Michael & Susan
Dell Center for
Healthy Living
Webinar Series](#)

[TX RPC Project
Health Policy
Resources](#)

[Texas Child
Health Status
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About

The [Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration \(TX RPC\) Project](#) is a nonpartisan network that aims to bridge research and policy by supporting partnerships between child health researchers and legislators.

If you and your legislative office are interested in collaborating with our team to receive data-driven information at state, district, and local levels, please reach out to TXRPCNetwork@uth.tmc.edu.

Contact Our Team

[Dr. Deanna Hoelscher, PhD](#), Principal Investigator

[Dr. Alexandra van den Berg, PhD](#), Co-PI

[Tiffni Menendez, MPH](#), Project Director

[Yuzi Zhang, PhD](#), Postdoctoral Fellow

[Shelby Flores-Thorpe, PhD](#), Postdoctoral Fellow

For more information about the TX RPC Project, please email: TXRPCNetwork@uth.tmc.edu.



Texas Research-to-Policy
— Collaboration Project —

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living
1836 San Jacinto Blvd, Suite 510
Austin, TX 78701 US

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