



American Society for Nutrition
Excellence in Nutrition Research and Practice

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Building an NHANES for the Future

This essential health survey needs your help!

- The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) has a record of success of improving our understanding of the link between diet and a variety of health behaviors and the major health outcomes that impact our nation.
- NHANES data is used broadly across the public and private sectors. Examples include:
 - Determining groups at risk and connect their nutrition and health data to federal nutrition program participation to vital statistics.
 - Identifying food, nutrition, and related health needs for underrepresented groups ranging from Native Americans to pregnant women and children.
 - Characterizing eating patterns, food preferences, and dietary intake for diverse interests ranging from public health officials and commodity groups to infant formula manufacturers to researchers, for example.
 - Informing development of national nutrition policy including the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and Dietary Reference Intakes.
 - Numerous applications beyond nutrition from development of medications and review and approvals of pesticide use to development of growth charts and informing clothing sizes.

ACTION: ASN recommends Congress direct the secretaries of USDA and HHS and other agencies as needed to engage with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) to conduct a comprehensive study of NHANES including opportunities to modernize the survey methodology.

Now is the time to build on the NHANES success and look to the future!

It's time to identify opportunities for innovation and collaboration to strengthen data collection and survey methodology.

- The NHANES program began in the early 1960s and while there have been updates over time, there is a critical need to identify priorities for the future of NHANES.
- NHANES is challenged by funding gaps, increasing costs, small sample sizes and limited funds for innovation and the study of new methodologies.
- There have been advances in technology and new opportunities for health care synergies that could be leveraged to make NHANES more efficient.
- A National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) study would identify strategies for modernization and ensure the sustainability and efficacy of NHANES.



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What is NHANES?

- The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) helps to assess the health and nutrition of adults and children in the United States. The survey is unique in that it combines interviews and physical examinations.
- NHANES includes demographic, socioeconomic, dietary, and health-related questions. The physical exam includes medical, dental, and physical measurements.
- NHANES is operated by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) but is used by multiple federal agencies and the private industry.

Why is NHANES Important?

- Used for federal policymaking include dietary guidance, food labeling, food fortification, food safety, tracking progress toward nutrition and health objectives, and setting nutrition research priorities. It has an impact on billions of dollars in federal expenditures.
- Is essential to nutrition and health research, policy, and programs.

Why is a Study Needed?

A study focused on the key components of NHANES will highlight a process to build the NHANES of the future. This study should:

- Examine survey challenges and offer recommendations to address them.
- Be conducted by an expert group with knowledge in health statistics, survey methodologies, and population health.
- Convene voices of the diverse set of NHANES stakeholders across the public and private sectors.
- Collaborate with and leverage the expertise and experience of CDC NCHS staff.

NUTRITION MATTERS for your constituents and ASN can help!

ASN is the authoritative voice informing Congress on the latest nutrition advances, issues, and value for supporting nutrition research. Since 1928, ASN has served as the premier scientific professional society made up of the world's top nutrition researchers and experts. ASN's experts are creating the future of nutrition!

Want to learn more? Contact Sarah Ohlhorst, MS, RD, at sohlhorst@nutrition.org or 240-428-3647