

Not Just in English Anymore

Good Nutrition, Buena Nutrición . . . Everyone Deserves a Healthy Diet

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Many immigrants to the United States face not only a language barrier for being able to purchase food but also cultural and socioeconomic barriers. Immigrants often cannot read English and are significantly handicapped in their access to nutritional information. Additionally, many new residents of the US face significant socioeconomic barriers, such as the inability to access available government programs and living in food deserts or food swamps. Food deserts are those areas with a lack of availability to sufficient food and food swamps are those areas where the available food is high calorie but nutritionally lacking.¹

Immigrants are also subject to misinformation about government food programs and often fearful of any involvement with government programs. For example, believing various rumors about the SNAP/WIC programs resulted in an 85 percent lower participation rate among Latin immigrants. Those rumors included believing that children should be taken away, that relatives could be deported, and that the money would have to be repaid.²

For those of us who work with government documents, we can provide numerous resources in languages other than English to combat this mistrust and misinformation. Major government information sources include the Catalog of Government Publications (CGP), USA.gov, MedlinePlus, PubMed, and Science.gov among others. There follow some individual examples of materials in other languages, information on resources in other languages, and some ideas for how and where to search.

Information in Other Languages

Catalog of Government Publications

Examples from the Catalog of Government publications:

- Agua: una gran opción (Water: a great option). <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/GOVPUB-A98-PURL-gpo131205>.
- Comidas Saludables Con Mi Plato (Healthy Meals with My Plate). <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/GOVPUB-A98-PURL-gpo131051>.

USA.gov

USA.gov in Spanish offers resources from a variety of agencies including the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Federal Nutrition Service (FNS) and the Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP). For example:

- Cómo solicitar cupones para alimentos (SNAP) (How to apply for food coupons). https://www.usa.gov/es/solicitar-cupones-alimentos-snap?_gl=1*ukht08*_ga*MTg5ODgwNzI0LjE3MDIzOTkwMDE.*_ga_GXFTMLX26S*MTcwNTkzNzUzNy4zLjEuMTcwNTkzNzUzOC4wLjAuMA.

Medlineplus.gov

Medlineplus.gov (<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/nutrition.html>) offers numerous resources in other languages including Arabic, Tagalog, Urdu, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Hmong, and Hindi. One example of the information in Arabic is https://myplateprod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/2020-12/MyPlate_Arabic.png.

Scholarly Sources

PubMed

A search for nutrition and immigration resulted in 1,906 articles with titles such as *Parental Immigration Status, Medicaid Expansion, And Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation* and *Supporting Food and Nutrition Security Among Migrant, Immigrant, and Refugee Populations*.

Science.gov

A search for nutrition in other languages resulted in 1070 articles ranging from information on pregnancy and nutrition to scholarly studies on how students describe their nutritional intake. Of the 1070 article, 540 are public access and include federally funded research studies. Science.gov is managed by the US Department of Energy (DOE) and provides information from multiple agencies, including some state level and international information.

Where and How to Search

CGP: <https://catalog.gpo.gov/>

The CGP includes information on laws, Congressional Hearings and actual publications in other languages.

USA.gov: <https://www.usa.gov/es/> (Spanish)

<https://www.usa.gov/> (English)

The Spanish version of USA.gov allows for direct searching using Spanish terms and will result in Spanish language information from various agencies and state governments. The English language internet site allows for searching of nutrition and related topics with the phrasing “in other languages.”

MedlinePlus: <https://medlineplus.gov/>

A search in MedlinePlus reveals multiple resources in a variety of languages for our users.

PubMed: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

Science.gov: <https://www.science.gov/index.html>

Both PubMed and Science.gov offer scholarly research information on the topic of nutrition, and both offer some international-level resources as well.

Keywords that were useful in my search were nutrition, nutrition in other languages, direct search in Spanish, food desert, immigrants, and nutrition, diet and nutrition, diet and culture, and diet and immigrants. If your library has users who need nutritional information in other languages, start with these resources and then continue to a more in-depth search.

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References

1. He Jin and Yongmei Lu, “Evaluating Consumer Nutrition Environment in Food Deserts and Food Swamps,” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 5 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18052675>.
2. Debra J. Pelto et al., “The Nutrition Benefits Participation Gap: Barriers to Uptake of SNAP and WIC among Latinx American Immigrant Families,” *Journal of Community Health* 45, no. 3 (2020): 488, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-019-00765-z>.