



FOOD & FUN HOUR: FOOD IS MEDICINE

Meeting #8

December 11, 2025

4-5 pm

Group Expectations

- How to interact and discuss via Zoom
- OAM community: all types of affiliations are welcome!
- Code of Conduct
 - We are all coming from different backgrounds and perspectives. Please interact with mindfulness and respect!



INTRODUCTIONS

First name & pronouns



**Finding joy through
the darkness of winter:
what is your favorite
winter routine?**



FOOD IS MEDICINE™

— COALITION —

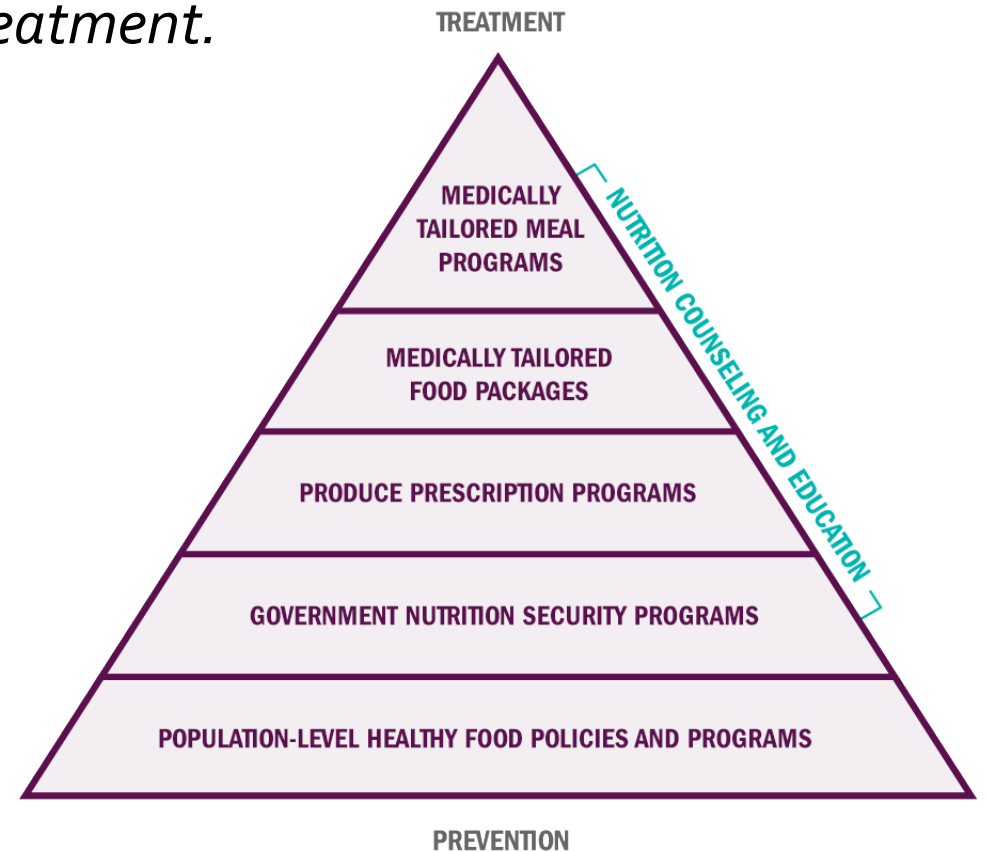
- Open Arms is a FIMC accredited organization!
- National coalition of nonprofit organizations dedicated to providing medically tailored meals, groceries, and nutrition support to individuals living with severe and chronic illnesses.
- FIMC advances equitable access to these lifesaving interventions through policy change, research, and best practices.

Conceptions of "Food Is Medicine"

According to the Aspen Institute's Food Is Medicine Research Action Plan, "Food is Medicine" refers to a spectrum of programs and services that respond to the critical link between nutrition and health, spanning from prevention to treatment.

These various programs and services include:

- Medical interventions
- Promoting food and nutrition security
- Advancing nutrition knowledge and skills



Medical Interventions

- Tend to be accessed through traditional, institutional healthcare
- Often involve medical system and community organization collaboration
- Additive interventions
- Length of intervention varies greatly

Medically Tailored Meals (MTMs) are meals provided to individuals living with complex severe or chronic illnesses that make shopping and/or cooking for themselves difficult. Participation is often recommended by someone's medical care team.

Open Arms's MTM program is designed by a team of RDs & DTRs who help plan and approve meals to meet the unique nutritional needs of our clients.

Produce Prescriptions (PPRs) involve health care professionals prescribing a predetermined dollar amount of fruits and vegetables to patients who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing negative health outcomes due to specific nutritional needs or food access challenges.

These programs are sometimes referred to as "FoodRx".

Food & Nutrition Security Programs

- Food security refers to consistently having enough to eat. Nutrition security focuses on consistent and adequate access to food that is *nourishing and health-promoting*.
- Part of the social safety net
- Funded and facilitated by a collaboration between federal, state, county governments
- Longer-term programs

Government Nutrition Security (FNS) Programs include WIC, SNAP, school meals, and others, aiming to increase food security and reduce hunger.

These programs serve 1 in 4 Americans throughout each year.

More information here:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/programs>

Market Bucks is a program in Minnesota that matches SNAP-EBT dollars (up to \$10 at each visit) one-for-one when used at participating farmers markets.

This allows SNAP recipients to stretch their dollars when buying fresh, responsibly-grown produce. Essentially, they get an extra \$10 to spend at each market visit!

More information here:

<https://www.hungersolutions.org/programs/market-bucks/>

Nutrition Knowledge and Skills-Building

- Another collaboration between healthcare & community organizations
- Aim to increase knowledge and skills around nutrition and cooking to promote independence and self-empowerment
- Shorter-term programs

Medically Tailored Grocery and Culinary Class Programs combine nutrition education, cooking instruction, and food assistance to help people manage and prevent chronic diseases through diet.

Classes are often led by registered dietitians or other nutrition professionals and include free groceries so participants can practice new skills at home.

Eligibility is often determined by a medical provider.

The programs themselves are often run by community organizations; however, some are provided by healthcare systems.

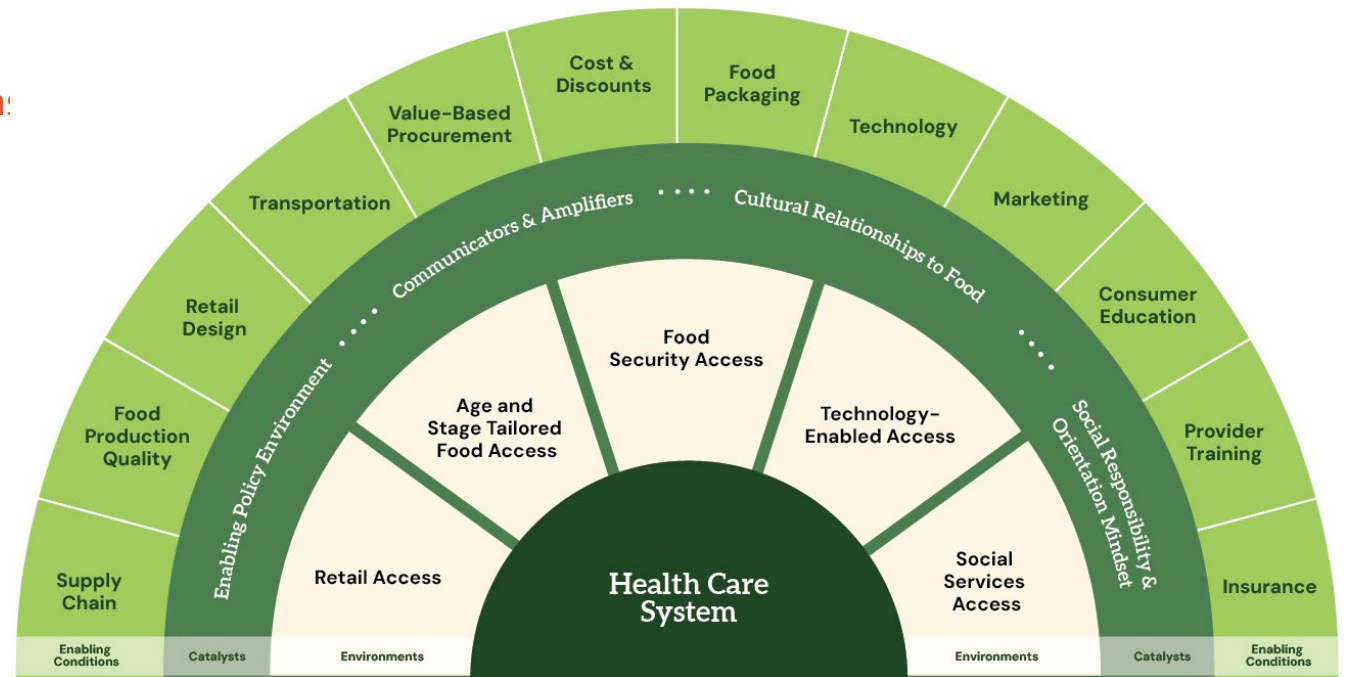
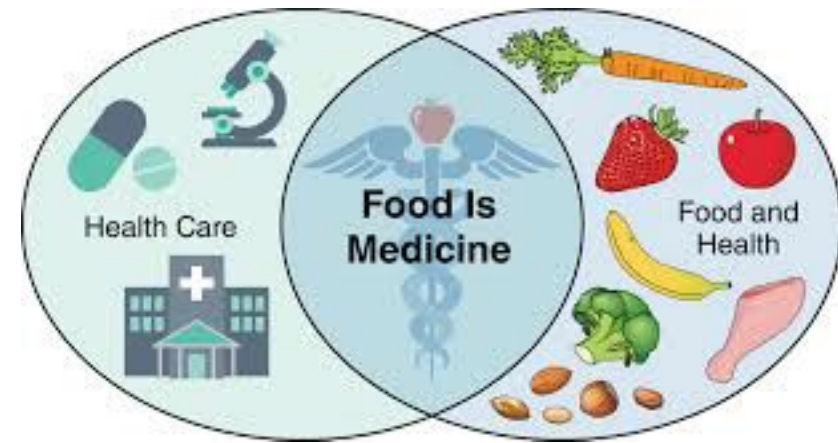
Local Examples:

- HCMC's [Redleaf Center for Family Healing's Teaching Kitchen](#) (runs a [program through Hennepin Health](#))
- [Cooking Matters](#) through UMN Extension
- Appetite for Change's [Community Cooks!](#) Series

“Food As Medicine”

While “food is medicine” and “food as medicine” may seem interchangeable, there are differences in how these labels are used—and by whom.

- Health insurers, health systems, and public and private healthcare seem to use **“food is medicine”** to describe evidence-based, clinically integrated nutrition intervention: eligible for healthcare funding or reimbursement. This can often have a prescriptive connotation.
- **“Food as medicine”** favors a broader, holistic approach to food and health, often used by nutrition & public health professionals and community organizations addressing food system issues. This term stresses individuals’ agency.
- **“Food and health”** can be a way to encompass all language around, and approaches to, the link between nutrition and wellness without prioritizing a certain stakeholder’s lens.



<https://www.newventureadvisors.net/food-is-medicine-vs-food-as-medicine/>

<https://odphp.health.gov/foodismedicine/understanding-food-medicine/our-vision-food-medicine>

MEDICALLY TAILORED MEALS: THE PROOF



This summary was compiled from peer-reviewed research studies and white papers conducted by members of FIMC for over a decade and is meant to provide a high-level overview of the types of impact that the MTM intervention has had on individuals living with severe, complex or chronic illnesses.

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MEDICALLY TAILORED MEALS IMPROVE HEALTH OUTCOMES & PATIENT SATISFACTION

While receiving MTMs, patients report:



Improved quality of life.^{1,3}

Fewer days when mental health interfered with quality of life.¹¹

People who receive medically tailored meals experienced:



Improved mental health:

Study participants experienced approximately two fewer depressive symptoms and 13% of respondents reported less binge drinking once they started receiving meals¹



Better diabetes management:

Among patients with type 2 diabetes, 47% reported an episode of hypoglycemia while they were receiving MTM, versus 64% while they were not receiving MTM. BMI decreased from 36.1 at baseline to 34.8 at follow-up.²



Healthier eating habits:

Recipients of MTM reported increasing fruit and vegetable intake to more than 2 times per day.⁴ Saturated fat servings decreased.³



Improved medication adherence:

Among participants with HIV, ARV medication adherence of 95% or greater increased from 46.7% of participants at baseline to 70% of participants at follow-up.³

Outcomes reported by clients of Open Arms of Minnesota

Our Client Satisfaction Survey is administered annually in July. It seeks to collect data on client satisfaction with Client Services and Nutrition Services, as well as the impact of services on clients' health and wellbeing.

The goal of this effort is to understand what our clients think of our services and how receiving our services impacts their overall wellbeing.

- **Study participants:** Clients who had received services from Open Arms in 2025
- **Self-selected sample:** Clients were mailed surveys to their homes with a stamped return envelope, as well as a QR code and website link if they wished to complete the survey online. Clients with known visual impairments were contacted directly to complete the survey over the phone.

Response rates:

In 2025, 37% of survey recipients (446 out of 1202 clients) responded.

In 2024, this rate was 32%

In 2023, this rate was 25%



Health Impact

Statement: Getting meals from Open Arms _____.	'24 Respondents	'25 Respondents
Has improved my health.	94%	95%
Has helped me take my medication on time.	72%	78%
Has helped me follow the treatment of my condition.	90%	93%
Helps me manage side effects of my medications or treatment.	65%	79%
I eat a variety of foods.	95%	98%

Health Impact

Statement: Since receiving Open Arms meals, _____.	'24 Respondents	'25 Respondents
My lab values have improved.	72%	81%
I have more energy.	63%	69%
I have had desirable weight gain.	28%	32%
I have had desirable weight loss.	40%	37%
My weight has stayed the same.	72%	72%

Overall Wellness Impact

Statement	'24 Respondents	'25 Respondents
Receiving meals provides comfort in my day.	96%	99%
Receiving meals allows me to spend more time with my family, friends, or hobbies.	89%	90%
Getting meals from Open Arms has improved my mental health.	87%	90%
I sleep better.	68%	78%
My memory has improved.	46%	58%
My stress has decreased since starting services.	88%	92%

The Financial Value of Medically Tailored Meals

Medically tailored meals not only provide healthful, nutritionally appropriate food to acutely or chronically ill people, but MTMs also are a cost-effective tool that may be utilized in someone's health care plan.

A lot of recent research has gone into demonstrating how MTMs can effectively lower health care intervention costs such as inpatient treatment and ER visits. This benefits insurers and patients, further reducing strain on health care systems.

Peer-reviewed research has demonstrated that for individuals with complex health conditions, medically tailored meals led to:

- 49% fewer inpatient admissions (Berkowitz 2019, JAMA)
- 16% reduction in health care costs (Berkowitz 2019, JAMA)
- 72% fewer skilled nursing facility admissions (Berkowitz 2019, JAMA)
- 70% fewer emergency department visits (Berkowitz 2018)
- 52% fewer inpatient admissions (Berkowitz 2018)

<https://www.glwd.org/food-is-medicine/policy/research/>

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2730768>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29608345/>



Discussion

- How does food security and FIMC concepts enrich other areas of our lives?
- How have you seen your relationship with food change since starting with OAM?
- How do we identify misinformation around concepts of "food as medicine?" What are some ways we can ground ourselves in our current needs around nutrition?
 - For example, social media is filled with misinformation about nutrition standards and ideals.

Future Discussion Topics

What would you like to talk about in future meetings?

Any guests you would like to see?

Do any of you have a food topic you'd like to present on?





Contact us!

Client Services: 612-767-7333

Mon – Thurs 8:30 am to 4 pm

Friday 8:30 am to 3 pm

Meals@openarmsmn.org

Nutrition Services: 612-540-7759

Nutrition@openarmsmn.org

If we cannot answer your call live, please leave us a detailed message with your name, date of birth, and what we can assist you with!

If we are having a hard time reaching each other, leave a timeframe that would be best for us to call you back.

THANK YOU FOR JOINING!