

IDEA Collective: March 2025

Women's History Month

Celebrating Women's History Month in Dietetics and Nutrition

Women experience disparities in health and health care and for Women's History Month we want to recognize organizations and services supporting health equity.

- **The National Institutes of Health (NIH) established the Office of Research on Women's Health in 1990.**

Prior to 1993, women were commonly not included in clinical trials. In 1993, U.S. Congress passed a law, which was previously a NIH's Policy, requiring the inclusion of women and minorities in research. Now women account for [roughly one-half of all participants](#) in NIH-support clinical research. [Underrepresentation](#) and [gender disparity in research funding](#) still exist but we are making progress!

See [Promoting Equality in Care - NIH](#) for an overview of key health disparities and supportive NIH institutes and centers.

- **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics history is Women's History.**

The Academy began as the American Dietetic Association in 1917, founded by the **visionary women Lenna F. Cooper and Lulu C. Graves** to support food conservation and public health during World War I. Over a century later, it continues its commitment to helping solve the greatest food and nutrition challenges of the day. ([Academy History](#))

- **Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program concept originated from a woman nutritionist.**

Agnes Higgins started diet counseling for low-income pregnant women at the Montreal Diet dispensary in 1948. As a director, she began a study investigating counseling and supplement food in 1963 and used the findings to advocate for a supplement feeding program for low-income pregnant women ([USDA WIC History](#)). This program became a model and proven delivery system that led to the WIC program. Check out the [Iowa WIC program](#), and the [WIC Works Resource System](#), including 170+ nutrition education handouts.

- **Additional organizations supporting women's health equity:**

The Heart Truth® is a national health education program through the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. They provide resources on risk assessment, nutrition and

behavior change education, and special resources for women, including pregnant or menopausal women ([Women and Heart Disease](#)).

The Office on Women's Health, part of the U.S. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, has been advancing women's health since the 1990s. It focuses on research, public education, career advancement for women in health and science, and addressing issues like health disparities, violence, HIV/AIDS, trauma-informed care, and healthcare provision. ([WomensHealth.gov](#)).

Girl'sHealth.gov, governed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, was established in 2002 and provides resources for young girls who may have questions about their period, fitness and sports, healthy eating, disabilities, low self-esteem and bullying, and relationships. ([GirlsHealth.gov](#)).

- **March 8th is International Women's Day—Check out organizations promoting health and nutrition equity abroad.**

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Advancing Nutrition program (2018-2023) developed resources to help promote healthy diets through a food systems approach ([USAID Advancing Nutrition](#)). They included resources on how to integrate gender into nutrition programs, available [here](#), and they are committed to promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

The Gender Nutrition Gap involves 40 international organizations that are working together to close the gender nutrition gap, including EngenderHealth, Stronger Foundations for Nutrition, Standing Together for Nutrition, Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies, and The Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India. See the list of organizations [here](#).

The World Food Programme promotes gender equality through the empowerment of women in communities where women face oppression and discrimination. They believe that gender equality is critical in areas of humanitarian crises, where food insecurity and malnutrition are experienced ([WFP - Gender Equality](#)).

Author(s): Jennessa Sharratt, RD2BE & Savannah Schultz, MS, RDN, LD
Last Updated: 4 March 2025