Seniors Eating Well: a Sourcebook of Lesson Plans and Activities
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Abstract
Objective- To increase the nutrition knowledge and improve the health behaviors of older adults, specifically reducing sodium, increasing healthy fats, snacks, fruits, vegetables and whole grains, reading nutrition labels, and physical activity. The target audience is middle-aged and older adults. Theory, prior research, and the rationale is based on U.S. census data, 2015-2020 U.S. Dietary Guidelines, and Social Cognitive Theory. Seniors Eating Well is a nine lesson curriculum that was completely updated in 2016 to incorporate the new U.S. Dietary Guidelines. It is appropriate for SNAP-ed and other older adult audiences at senior centers, community centers, and senior housing centers and with middle-aged adults (aged 50-65) at work sites, clubs, churches, or other organizations. Nine lessons were developed covering nutrition, meal and snack planning, food preparation and physical activity. Evaluations include short retrospective surveys after each lesson and a three-six month follow-up. Student t-tests have shown significant changes in a previous edition.

Statement of Objective
To increase the nutrition knowledge and improve the health behaviors of older adults, specifically reducing sodium, increasing healthy fats, healthy snacks, fruits, vegetables and whole grains, reading nutrition labels, and physical activity.

Materials developed:
9 PowerPoints with 45 minute lesson plans:
Meal Planning and Decision Making Programs:
Lesson 1 – Great Grain Discoveries
Lesson 2 – All Star Senior Snacks
Lesson 3 – Heart Healthy Meals

Use of Theory, Prior Research
The program was developed based on Social Cognitive theory, the U.S. Dietary Guidelines, U.S. Physical Activity guidelines for seniors, and further research on senior nutrition and physical activity.

Target Audience
These lessons were designed to reach older adults at places they congregate: senior centers, community centers, and senior housing centers. They can also be used with middle-aged adults (aged 50-65) at work sites, clubs, churches, or other organizations. Most are designed to be presented by para-professionals, with SNAP-ed. They can also be used by family consumer science and nutrition educators as “pick up and go” lesson plans. Nurses, and staff from aging services, or volunteers can be trained to use these lessons.

Food Preparation Programs:
Lesson 4 – Cooking and Seasoning with Herbs
Lesson 5 – Savory Soups
Additional Handout - Double Strength Calcium Recipes

Social Relationships and Fitness Program:
Lesson 6 – Fitness Fun

Diet, Health and Chronic Disease Prevention Programs:
Lesson 7 – Evaluating Dietary Supplements for Seniors
Lesson 8 – Dietary Fat—Fact or Fiction?
Lesson 9 – New Concepts in Weight Control—Energy Density

Results
Previous versions of this curriculum were evaluated and showed positive impact by increasing knowledge, skills/abilities, intent to change behaviors, and behavior change. The program has also been used by many others states’ Extension services and outside Extension by older adult community programmers.

Description of Evaluation
Post-program and 3-6 month follow-up evaluations were developed to measure gains in knowledge (five point scale) and changes in behavior.

Materials developed continued:
15 recipes, 5 games and activities, 24 handouts, marketing and evaluation tools. The lessons have also been updated in 2006, 2011, and 2016 following the U.S. Dietary Guidelines, and recently adapted for an online course.