

Virtual Nutrition Education for Older Adults: A Food Smarts Intervention in Citywide Congregate Meal Sites

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Abstract

Older adults are at high risk for inadequate nutrition, especially during the COVID 19 pandemic. Virtual nutrition education can be an effective intervention to encourage older adults at home to adopt behaviors that improve nutritional status and support healthy aging.

Objectives

To evaluate the virtual implementation of *Food Smarts*, a learner-centered nutrition curriculum, in citywide congregate meal sites using process evaluation methods (8.7, 8.8, 9.1).

Methods

Virtual *Food Smarts* workshops were delivered via online platform (Zoom) and participants joined via personal devices from home. Each workshop consists of four weekly classes, each with a duration of 60 minutes. Within a six-month period, 10 workshops (40 classes) for seven congregate meal sites were delivered. An online post-workshop satisfaction survey was administered via email after the last class. The survey evaluated nutrition-related knowledge and dietary behaviors as a result of class participation.

Results

Out of 477 participants, 331 participants attended two or more classes and 108 survey responses were collected. Nearly 100% participants expressed positive behavior change in all measures. Behavior measures with the largest changes included increased consumption of fruits and vegetables (98%), increased knowledge of whole grains and beans (99%) and increased confidence in ability to prepare food for self (99%).

Figure 1. Participants responses to post-workshop survey due to participation in the *Food Smarts* workshops.

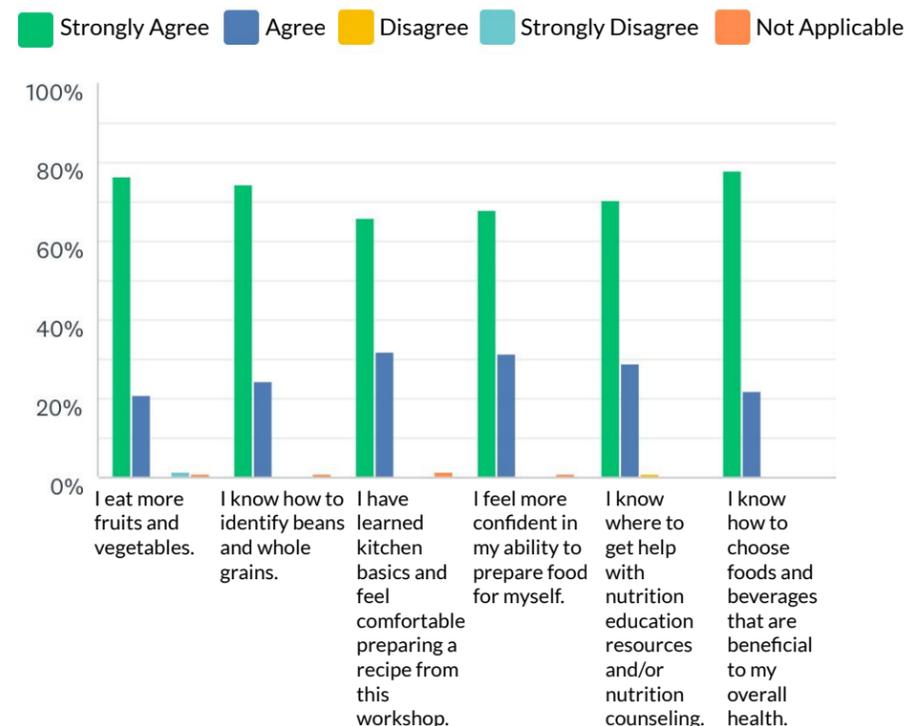


Figure 2. A screenshot of a live virtual *Food Smarts* workshop.

Conclusion

The virtual delivery of *Food Smarts* has demonstrated success in improving dietary behaviors and self-management of nutritional health for nearly all participants. These results can be used as preliminary data for informing future interventions and virtual nutrition education programs for older adult populations.

Acknowledgements



This program serving the community is funded by the City of San Francisco's Department of Disability and Aging Services.

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