Healthy Eating with Diabetes Program: Changes Eating Habits and Increases Confidence

The Situation
The American Diabetes Association (ADA) estimated in 1997 the total annual cost attributable to diabetes in the United States was $98 billion. The Idaho Diabetes Control Program in 1998 estimates the total annual cost of the disease in Idaho is about $338 million. Diabetes is a chronic, life-threatening disease that can lead to blindness, heart disease, kidney failure, and amputations. According to the Director of the Centers for Disease Control, Jeffrey P. Koplan, “Dramatic new evidence signals the unfolding of a diabetes epidemic in the United States. With obesity on the rise, we can expect the sharp increase of diabetes rates to continue. Unless these dangerous trends are halted, the impact on our nation’s health and medical care costs will be overwhelming.”

Evidence shows education is the cornerstone of successful diabetes management and care. Effective diabetes education is key to reducing the number of complications associated with diabetes and in decreasing the overall cost of the disease.

Our Response
Diabetes in Idaho, a University of Idaho Extension Program, was piloted statewide in the Spring of 2000. Following the pilot, several revisions were made in the curriculum to better serve northern Idaho residents. In order to better market the program, Diabetes in Idaho changed its name to Healthy Eating with Diabetes.

Healthy Eating with Diabetes. The topics of this 8-hour program include:

Meeting 1: Why Control is Important, Heart Healthy, The Idaho Plate Method
Meeting 2: The Supermarket Tour
Meeting 3: Planning Meals, Resources Available to You

Program Outcomes
A follow-up evaluation was mailed to all Bonner, Boundary, and Kootenai County participants. Thirty-nine percent of evaluations were returned. Results show the effectiveness of Healthy Eating with Diabetes.

• 87% are more familiar with the American Diabetes Association’s Standards of Care
• 58% feel more confident when seeing their physician
• 75% feel the changes they have made as a result of this program have improved their blood sugar levels
• 67% feel that the changes they have made as a result of this program have improved their cholesterol levels
• 100% feel more conscious about trying to eat a lower fat diet
• 100% feel more confident about planning meals
• 100% feel more confident about buying groceries
• 87% have increased their consumption of fruits and vegetables
• 88% feel more confident about managing their diabetes
• 63% are still using the Idaho Plate Method or aspects of the Idaho Plate Method when sitting down to breakfast/lunch/dinner
• 75% feel encouraged to seek out more information about diabetes that would help them manage their disease
• 100% of participants would encourage other people to take “Healthy Eating with Diabetes”

Comments from Participants
“I eat smaller portions, read labels when at the grocery store, and all in all I am always aware of your great program.”

“I’m a health care provider and use this information to educate my clients. Since taking this class I provide clients with printouts and discuss the Idaho Plate Method. It has made it easier for them to adhere to. I find myself using this program even though I do not have diabetes.”

“I enjoyed this class very much and learned a lot. I’m just the cook in the family, and my husband is his own caregiver. He does very well, checks his blood daily and eats right. The trip through the grocery store was very good for him as he was not familiar with it. As a bonus, I’ve lost 20 pounds and feel much better. Thank-you so very much.”

The Future
Due to the success of Healthy Eating With Diabetes, this program will continue to be taught in northern Idaho.

For More Information
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