

# IMPACT



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## Healthy Eating with Diabetes

### *The Situation*

Diabetes is a chronic, life-threatening disease that can lead to blindness, heart disease, kidney failure, and amputations. According to the American Diabetes Association, 15.7 million Americans have diabetes. The most recent figures from a 1998 Department of Health and Welfare survey found that 37,000 people living in Idaho were diagnosed with diabetes. It is estimated that another 18,500 people are undiagnosed with the disease. Many people are unaware of the signs and symptoms.

Nutrition education is a critical component of managing diabetes. However, diabetes education is difficult to access due to its high cost and lack of availability in rural communities.

### *Our Response*

*Healthy Eating with Diabetes* is an education program that targets the management of diabetes through increased knowledge and healthy meal planning. This program was utilized to meet the needs of people with diabetes, their family members, and those interested in learning more about the disease. Kootenai (District I) and Canyon (District II) Counties were two pilot sites offering the program.

The American Diabetes Association's Alert brochure was used to promote awareness and advocacy. Signs and symptoms of diabetes were emphasized.

The Idaho Plate Method was the tool used to teach healthy meal planning. The Idaho Plate Method is designed to help clients visually estimate servings and distribute carbohydrate intake over the day. It emphasizes the use of fruits, vegetables, and grains, while limiting servings of meat and fat. Individuals with a new diagnosis of diabetes frequently have difficulty grasping complex meal planning concepts. The simplicity of the Idaho Plate Method makes it practical for a wide range of audiences.

### *Achievements*

Participants demonstrated an understanding of Idaho Plate Method concepts through multiple meal planning activities. An increase in knowledge was measured through pre and post-tests. Areas included:

- impact of fruit and vegetable consumption on health
- awareness of new food products that meet healthy eating guidelines
- types of fat and their role in a healthy diet
- importance of eating a variety of foods

Participants expressed a renewed motivation in managing their disease. They were excited about putting a "new" and "easy" concept to work. An increased ability to communicate to their spouse and/or family members about healthy eating was also shared. Appreciation for the availability and quality of the program was conveyed as well as, positive comments regarding the low cost of the program.



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## ***The Future***

Suggestions and comments made by participants will be incorporated into *the Healthy Eating with Diabetes* program. The revised program will be offered quarterly and in response to community needs. Future audience targets will include low-income clientele, Hispanics, Native Americans, and the elderly.

## ***For More Information***

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