Senior Extension Nutrition Program Benefits
Seniors’ Health

The Situation
Good nutrition is essential to the health, self-sufficiency, and quality of life of older adults. Yet with age comes an increased chance of becoming dependent on others for help in performing activities of daily living. Chronic illnesses or conditions such as arthritis, osteoporosis, hypertension, heart disease, and diabetes can limit mobility making buying, cooking, and preparing meals appropriate for their condition difficult and confusing. When low income is compounded with poor health, even more seniors have difficulty obtaining an adequate amount of food. Other factors contributing to inadequate food intake may include an inability to obtain or prepare food on a daily basis, lack of acceptable foods, lack of social support from family or friends, and living alone.

Our Response
University of Idaho’s Senior Extension Nutrition Program (SENP) was created in 2002 in response to Aging & Adult Services’ need to better serve their high-nutritional risk seniors. With funding from AAS, SENP uses Nutrition Advisors to offer in-home lessons to seniors in the educational areas of nutrition and food safety. Seniors receive a minimum of six home visits from a Nutrition Advisor. Educational lessons may include:
- The importance of a healthy diet for long-term health.
- How to plan meals using the MyPyramid.
- How to prepare quick, low-cost and nutritious meals.
- The health benefits of eating fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods.
- How to make eating alone a pleasant experience.

Since September 2002, SENP has worked with 243 seniors with 122 graduates. Nutrition Advisors have taught over 1,710 lessons.

Program Outcomes
FY2006 data indicates the following behavior changes:

Percentage of participants who understand how to use food to better manage their health or health condition
The Future
University of Idaho Extension in Kootenai County is currently working on a senior nutrition curriculum tailor made for in-home visitation. This curriculum will be pilot tested in 2007.

Additionally, University of Idaho Extension Kootenai County will continue to pursue yearly funding from Aging & Adult Services to offer the Senior Extension Nutrition Program.

For More Information
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