

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

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Steps To A New You Improves Eating Habits

The Situation

The 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and *MyPyramid* recommend that adults consuming a 2,000 calorie diet include the following foods daily: 2 cups of fruit, 1½ cups of vegetables, 3 or more ounce-equivalents of whole grains, and 3 cups of fat-free or low-fat milk or equivalent milk products.

Unfortunately, most Americans do not meet these recommendations. Recent studies indicate that approximately 30 percent of adults met fruit and vegetable recommendations and consumed only one serving of whole grain and one cup of milk per day. On the other hand, carbonated soft drinks contributed almost 30 percent of our daily beverage intake, with sugar-sweetened soft drinks providing more calories to the diet than any other beverage.

Our Response

Three Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Educators (Grace Wittman, Laura Sant, Marnie Spencer) taught a nine-lesson curriculum, *Steps To A New You*, which focuses on pleasurable and healthy eating, a realistic body image, and physical activity. In 2007 the three extension educators taught this program in Cassia, Franklin, and Bingham counties.

The nutrition topics contained in the classes included: (1) recommendations from the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and *MyPyramid*; (2) food portion sizes, (3) fast food, and (4) how to become an intuitive eater (eating when hungry and stopping when full).

Participants provided demographic information and completed an eating habits survey at three points: (1) Pre (before the classes began), (2) Post (after the last class at week 9), and (3) Follow-up (week 20).

Program Outcomes

Demographics: Of the 44 participants, who provided demographic information, 43 were female and one was male; 43 were White, one was American Indian, and one was Hispanic. The age range for these individuals was 23-78 years-old.

Eating Habits Survey: Results from the eating habits survey included food intake (Table 1), beverage and fast food consumption (Table 2), and eating style (Table 3).

Food intake by food group: Results in Table 1 show that participants made small improvements in their intake of most food groups. Grain and whole grain consumption increased by approximately ½ serving/day (from 3.2 to 3.8 servings/day for grains and 2.0 to 2.5 servings/day for whole grains). Fruit, vegetable, and milk/yogurt consumption increased by approximately ½ cup/day (1.0 to 1.4 cups of vegetables/day; 0.9 to 1.4 cups fruit/day, and 1.5 to 2.1 cups of milk/yogurt/day).

Cheese consumption remained virtually unchanged at 0.8 oz/day, but there was a 12 percent increase in the number of participants who consumed fat-free or skim milk products. Meat consumption decreased by approximately ½ oz/day (from 4.0 to 3.6 oz/day).

Table 1. Food intake by food group

Food Group	Pre (N=53)	Post (N=35)	Follow-up (N=33)
Grains	3.2 serv.	3.2 serv.	3.8 serv.
Whole grains	2.2 serv.	2.0 serv.	2.5 serv.
Vegetables	1.0 cup	1.4 cups	1.4 cups
Fruit (cups)	0.92 cups	1.4 cups	1.3 cups
Milk/Yogurt	1.5 cups	1.8 cups	2.1 cups
Cheese	0.8 oz	0.7 oz	0.8 oz
Type of dairy (fat content)	39.6% ate fat-free	45.7% ate fat-free	51.5% ate fat-free
Meat & Beans	4.0 oz	3.8 oz	3.6 oz

Beverage and fast food consumption: Table 2 indicates there was an 11 percent decrease in the number of participants who drank 2 or more sodas/day. Most participants (60%) consumed diet soda, but other sweetened beverages tended to be regular and not diet.

There was a 10 percent decrease in the number of individuals who ate fast food 2-5 times per week and a nine percent increase in the number of individuals who never ate large portions at fast food restaurants.

Table 2. Beverage and fast food consumption

Beverage	Pre (N=53)	Post (N=35)	Follow-up (N=33)
Drank ≥ 2 soda/day	17%	6%	6%
Diet soda	62.5%	58%	59%
Sweetened drink	64% drank regular	62.5% drank regular	60% drank regular
Fast Food			
Eat fast food 2-5 times/wk	13%	3%	9%
Never eat super size or eat large portions	55%	60%	64%

Eating Style: Results in Table 3 show that approximately 50 percent of participants ate when they were hungry. There was a 21 percent increase in the number of participants who learned to stop eating when they were full (47% to 66%) and a 12 percent decrease in those who did other activities while they were eating (26% to 14%).

Table 3. Eating style

Type of eater	Pre (N=53)	Post (N=35)	Follow-up (N=33)
Eat when hungry	51% most of the time	51% most of the time	51% most of the time
Stop eating when full	47% most of the time	66% most of the time	52% most of the time
Eat when doing other activities	26% most of the time	14% most of the time	18% most of the time

These improved eating habits may decrease participants' risk of developing certain chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and some cancers.

For More Information

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