



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Affiliated with National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated Country Women of the World and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service
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Leader Training Guide

A Few Simple Things Seniors Can Do To Improve Their Health

Objectives:

1. Participants will learn how to take simple steps to improve nutritional/health status.
2. Participants will understand that consuming too many of some nutrients/foods often replaces important nutrients/foods.
3. Participants will consider their lifestyle and learn to create ways to integrate these "simple things" into their lives.

Lesson Overview/Introduction:

The primary behaviors contributing to overweight and obesity in children and adults, and the major causes of morbidity and mortality in adults are physical inactivity and poor diet. The result is we often hear about the things we should not eat – do not eat this, eat less of that, etc. However, to be healthy and to improve nutritional status, there are foods, nutrients and subsequent behaviors we need "more of", things we need to do. Poor diet is not only too much fat, simple sugars, calories, and sodium; it is also a lack of fiber, fruit, vegetables, vitamins and minerals and phytochemicals.

The purpose of this lesson is to encourage a change in thinking to focus on what we need to consume "more of" – how we can take a proactive approach to healthy behaviors. *However, an overriding goal in this lesson is activate participants' input to create solutions for a healthy lifestyle – to get participants to help each other "think out of the box" as they devise ways to integrate these behaviors into their daily lives. Each of the participants will need to consider their lifestyle to do so.*

- **NOTE – Please emphasize to participants to follow therapeutic diets as prescribed by their physician. If they are on a fluid restriction, they must follow their physician's recommendations.**
- **This lesson is for general health and nutrition and is not intended to replace or act as a "special" or therapeutic diet. Individuals must consult with their physician if they have dietary restrictions before making changes in their diets.**
- **Participants should consult with their physician before beginning physical activity or exercise, or before increasing or changing their current physical activity.**

Lesson:

The leader should read over the following list and then discuss each behavior to create ways that individuals in the group can make necessary changes in their lifestyle:

“A Few Simple Things” include the following:

1. Drink plenty of fluids, including water, daily.
2. Consume at least 2 servings of fruit daily.
3. Consume at least 3 vegetables daily.
4. Consume 3 servings from the dairy group daily.
5. Make ½ your grains whole grains.
6. Be moderately physically active for a total of 30 minutes each day for most days per week.

Each simple thing is described in more detail in the following paragraphs:

1. Drink plenty of fluid including water daily. Water is vital for your body - which is comprised of ~60% water. Water helps energize muscles, flushes your kidneys, keeps your skin looking good, and helps maintain normal bowel function. Water intake should equal water output – if it does not, you can become dehydrated. Warmer climates, physical activity, and high altitudes accentuate fluid loss. The brain communicates with the kidneys (how much to hold or excrete). If your urine is clear, it is usually a sign that you are hydrated.

The sense of thirst sometimes diminishes with age. Therefore it is very important to consume water to stay hydrated. Water can be tap water from the city or a well or pre-bottled water.

*** Participants can share ideas about how to increase water / fluid intake. Consider concerns such as “What if I don’t like water”, “How can I stay hydrated if I’m shopping”, etc. Write them down.**

2. Consume at least 2 fruits daily. Fruits contain vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytochemicals (plant compounds that have health benefits). Most people like fruit, but how many of us consume it consistently, as part of our lifestyle, every day? Do we choose fruit over fruit tart?

Serving size – ½ c of chopped, raw, cooked or canned fruit (in 100% juice or water); 1 medium piece of fruit (~ size of a baseball); ½ cup of 100% juice.

What do we mean by fruit? The following examples do not count as a “fruit”: canned fruit in syrup, fruit flavored Jell-O, fruit cooked with added fat and sugar, and fruit-flavored candy.

*** Have participants consider how they can have 2 servings of fruit each day. Consider lifestyles of participants. For example, do participants eat in restaurants often? Do participants live alone? What type of food can they eat? Is chewing a concern? Write down the ideas.**

3. Consume at least 3 vegetables daily. Vegetables also contain vitamins, minerals, fiber and phytochemicals. Once again, while they may like vegetables, do they

consistently consume vegetables every day, as part of their lifestyles, verses choosing chips, fries, etc.

Serving sizes for vegetables: 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables (about the size of a fist); ½ cup of other vegetables; ½ cup of 100% vegetable juice. By the way, beans are a good source of protein and grouped with animal foods. Beans are also plant foods and are high in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals. Fried vegetables do not count!

*** Have participants consider how they can have 3 vegetable servings every day? Once again, consider lifestyles of members, i.e. cooking for one? Chewing? How can they increase vegetable servings with typical meals?**

4. Consume 3 servings from the dairy group daily. Dairy foods are milk or foods made from milk and are a great source of the mineral calcium. Calcium is essential for bone growth in children and youth, and bone maintenance in adults. Dairy foods are also a good source of protein. For individuals over 50 years old, 1200 mg is the daily recommendation (an 8 ounce glass of milk contains 300 mg of calcium).

Serving sizes for dairy foods: 1 cup of fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, or pudding, 2 ounces of fat-free or low-fat processed cheese; 1½ ounces of hard natural fat-free or low-fat cheese.

What about someone who is lactose intolerant? There are many choices now available for lactose-free milk products. You can also try soy and almond milk.

Non-dairy sources of calcium include collards, black-eyed peas, canned salmon with bones, sardines with bones, and orange juice fortified with calcium, turnip greens, spinach, broccoli, etc.

*** Have participants discuss ways to increase calcium in their diet. Consider recipes (remember to keep the fat content down), snacks, etc.**

5. Make ½ your grains whole. Grains are plant foods - examples include wheat, bran, barley, rice, oats, etc. Whole grains contain a variety of nutrients, fiber and phytochemicals. When grains are refined, some of these nutrients and the fiber are lost. Examples of refined grain foods liked by many people include cornbread, biscuits, and Ritz/saltine crackers. While most people can consume these moderately as part of a healthy diet day to day, they should also consume whole grains. How does one know if a grain is “whole”? Look at the ingredient list on the package and the first ingredient should be “whole” (wheat, bran, etc.) or whole grain brown rice. The grain should be “whole”.

*** Have participants discuss options to increase whole grains in recipes and meals. Consider substitutions for typical, refined grain foods. Write these down.**

6. Be physically active. For heart health, individuals should engage in moderate physical activity for 30 minutes or more per day most days of the week. Moderate physical activity can be walking, gardening, vacuuming, etc. It is not necessary to join a gym or participate in an aerobics/exercise class to be **physically active**. Exercising in a gym and participating in aerobics classes can be excellent ways to

exercise. However, it is important to increase physical activity in one's daily life based on one's own lifestyle. For example, if a person's office is on the 5th floor, they might choose to take the stairs instead of taking the elevator to their office.

*** Discuss ways to increase physical activity. Consider where participants live, work, etc. Be creative (i.e. hold a "walking" FCL Club meeting – if members can participate).**

****NOTE to share with participants: If you have one or more conditions that limit or prohibit certain forms of physical activity, please talk with your doctor to determine if there are ways to be physically active.**

Lesson Summary:

Many Americans regularly consume diets high in fat, sugar, calories, and sodium. Also, their diets often fall short of vital foods / nutrients. It is a dichotomy – **that we consume so many calories, yet are deficient on so many nutrients.** A few simple behaviors can contribute to improved health status. It starts with a decision, a little planning and some creativity!

Suggested Activities:

Have a designated person track the discussion and suggestions for each of the 6 "simple things" (behavior changes) by writing them down. Summarize at the end of the program. Participants should discuss ways they can incorporate these behaviors into their lifestyle. List ideas, recipes, foods, behaviors, etc. on an easel pad or have a designated person write these down,

Suggested Materials:

Easel, easel pad, and markers. If these items are not available, use a piece of poster board, or provide notebook paper and pens or pencils for each participant.

Lesson Prepared by:

Angela P. Forbes, MS, RD, LD – Area Agent, Clemson Extension Service.

Lesson Reviewed by:

C. Marie Hegler - Area Food Safety & Nutrition Agent, Clemson Extension Service

Sources/References:

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- American Heart Association - http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Caregiver/Replenish/WhatisaServing/What-is-a-serving_UCM_301838_Article.jsp
- www.choosemyplate.gov