

## **Eating Heart Health With Little Time and Money**

### **Introduction**

Many people are busy and find it difficult to shop, plan, prepare, eat, and clean up after meals at home. This can be difficult to stay in the food budget if we are eating out or picking up something for dinner. It can be difficult to eat heart healthy when eating out or having take-out if you are not mindful of healthy food choices.

Many people think they don't have time to eat in a heart healthy way, so they:

- Skip breakfast and lunch and eat one big meal in the evening.
- Eat out several times per week.
- Buy boxed or instant foods or foods that are already prepared.
- Buy food from vending machines.

### **Objectives**

Participants will learn:

- To identify the influences on menu planning, shopping, and preparation of meals.
- How to eat out in heart healthy ways.
- To identify the influences of advertising on food choices.

### **Icebreaker**

*What foods do you eat that don't have to be cooked or can be eaten with little preparation?*

Write the answers on a black board, erase board, large piece of paper taped to the wall. Discuss these foods and how they can be incorporated into a heart healthy meal plan.

### **Eating Healthy on the Run**

Eating on the run for many often means eating foods that are higher in fat, sodium, and calories. For example, we eat snacks and candies from a vending machine or high fat hot dogs and french fries from a fast food restaurant. People often eat these foods because they are easy to buy or quick to fix. Taste may not be as important when they are in a rush. These foods can be higher in fat, sodium, and calories. They may also eat bigger portions of foods that are higher in fat and calories when there is on time to prepare side dishes like salad, vegetables, or rice.

Today more of the restaurants and take outs establishments are trying to offer healthier choices by offering baked meats and baked potatoes as choices instead of fried foods. Convenience foods are also trying to offer healthier choices by reducing some of the fat, cholesterol, and sugar content in foods.

There needs to be a balance between eating out and eating at home. This can be easier on the food budget. The best way to create a balance is to PLAN meals, even when you are going to eat out or pick something up for dinner.

- Plan your meals according to your family's schedule.

If there are ballgames to attend, then you will want to plan meals that can be ready when you get home, so you can eat and clean up before leaving for the game. These meals can be done in the crock pot, be leftovers that are reheated, or be meals that you have already done some preparation for such as chopping vegetables for salads or a quick stir fry.

- Use a shopping list and buy for at least a week at a time.
  - Make and use a shopping list.
  - Check the food sale ads.
  - Use coupons. Check the Sunday paper and clip the coupons for foods you normally buy or need. Remember-coupons do not save you money if you buy products that you don't need. Always compare the price of the item with the coupon with other items on the shelf
  
- Convenience can cost more, such as canned beans cost more than the dry beans, boneless, skinless chicken cost more than whole chicken and precut vegetables cost more.
- Buy fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season and buy the amount the family will eat.
- When possible, shop alone.
- Do not shop when you are hungry.
- Watch for errors at the cash register.  
This will save you money and time by making only one trip to the store.
- Share some of the meal preparation with family members such as setting the table, getting out foods for preparation, or cleaning as you go with some family members washing and drying dishes as they are used in meal preparation.
- Cook in advance.
  - Make spaghetti sauce in advance
  - Cook more chicken than you will use for one meal and refrigerate or freeze it for another meal.
  - Make enough salad for 2 meals, but don't add dressing.
  - Chop vegetables for stir fry or salads.
  - Cook 2 or 3 dishes or casseroles on your day off and freeze for another day. Use these when you don't have time to cook.
- Pack you lunch to carry to work the night before.
- Cook Simply.
  - Steam vegetables and broil meats.
  - Use frozen vegetables without sauces.
  - Make one-pot meals like stews and casseroles.
  - Use the microwave for cooking and defrosting.
  - Learn simple recipes that can be made in less than 30 minutes.
- Use Herbs and Spices
  - Chop fresh herbs and place in ice cubes trays. Fill trays with water and freeze. Store the frozen cubes in a plastic bag. Use when you need fresh herbs.
  - Grow some herbs in a sunny windowsill such as cilantro, basil, thyme, or rosemary.
  - Keep dried herbs on hand. One teaspoon of dried herbs is equal to 3 teaspoons of fresh herbs.
  
- Keep quick snacks on hand such as:
  - Fat free and low fat yogurt

- Fat free and low fat cheese
- Baked corn tortilla chips
- Whole grain breads

## **Handouts**

### **Money-Saving Tips**

### **Tips for Busy Families**

### **Shopping List**

## **Activity**

### **Rose's Dilemma**

Read the following dilemma and give the group about 5 minutes to come up with suggestions as to some solutions to this dilemma.

Rose is married and has two sons, ages 7 and 10. Her husband Tom works for a construction company Monday through Friday. He leaves for work at 6:30 a.m. and gets home at 4:00 p.m. Rosa also works Monday through Friday at a restaurant. She leaves home at 10 a.m. and gets home around 7:00 p.m.

She prepares the family's dinner after she comes home from work every night. Many times, she is too tired to cook, so she often picks up a pepperoni pizza, burgers, and fries, or fried chicken on her way home. Rose sees that the whole family is gaining weight. Tom wants her to make more traditional dinners. Rose tries to get her husband to help her with dinner, but he is also very tired. Besides, he thinks that cooking is the woman's job. What can Rose do?

Here are some suggestions to the dilemma if you need some to get the group started:

- Rose could cook 2 or 3 meals over the weekend and store them in the freezer.
- Her husband could help her by putting the casseroles from the freezer she made the night before in the oven to cook when he comes home from work.
- Several families could get together and share meals.
- Her children could help her by setting the table and doing dishes.
- Once in a while, Rose could buy roasted chicken instead of fried chicken, or burger and fries, or she could buy a vegetarian pizza instead of a meat pizza.

### **Eating Out the Heart Healthy Way**

Many people eat at fast-food restaurants because:

- The food is served quickly
- The food tastes good
- The food is less expensive than food at sit down restaurants
- Special food and toys appeal to children
- There may be a playground for children

Fast foods can be higher in fat, sodium, and calories, but you can choose lower fat, lower sodium, and lower calorie foods from the menu. You don't have to give up eating fast foods to eat right.

Here are some tips on how to make heart-healthy choices at fast-food restaurants:

#### Sandwiches

- Order without mayonnaise, tartar sauce, or special sauces. Try mustard or lowfat mayonnaise.
- Order small, plain hamburgers instead of deluxe sandwiches.
- Order sandwiches made with lean roast beef or turkey. Chicken salad and tuna salad made with regular mayonnaise are high in fat.
- Choose grilled chicken sandwiches instead of breaded chicken sandwiches.

#### Main dishes

- Choose soft tacos or corn tortillas filled with chicken or lean beef, vegetables, and salsa.
- Ask for lowfat cheese and lowfat sour cream.
- Ask for cheese and sour cream to be served on the side. And use only a small amount.
- Choose rotisserie-style chicken rather than fried chicken. Always remove the skin.
- Order pizza with vegetable toppings like peppers, mushrooms, or onions. Ask for half the usual amount of cheese.

#### Side dishes

- Share a small order of french fries instead of eating a large order by yourself
- Ask that no salt be added to your serving.
- Order a baked potato instead of fries.
- Try salsa or vegetables as a potato topping
- Ask that high fat toppings be served on the side, and use less.
- Use low calorie/lowfat salad dressing when eating a salad. Bring your own if the restaurant does not offer a lowfat version. You can buy packets at some stores. Ask that the dressing be served on the side and use less.

#### Beverages

- Choose water, fruit juice, or lowfat (1%) or fat free (skim) milk rather than a soda or a milk shake.
- Order a small soda, if that is what you want to drink.

#### Desserts

- Buy the smallest size nonfat frozen yogurt instead of cookies or pies.

If you are picking something up for dinner, prepare the side dishes at home and just pick up the main course such as picking up chicken or fish then prepare a salad, some green beans, creamed potatoes and rolls at home. This can save you money because the side dishes usually don't cost much to prepare at home and take little time to prepare.

When you eat out or have take-out, the amount of sodium, fat, and calories will usually be higher than when you prepare food at home. You have control of how and what is added to the food when you are preparing it at home.

Plan to eat and prepare the majority of your meals at home. You can save money on your food budget this way.

### **Food Advertising**

*Icebreaker Name some food advertisements that have prompted you to buy the product. Discuss some of the things about the advertisement that influenced you purchase.*

Allow about 5 minutes for discussion

Food advertising is big business. Advertisements try to get people to buy a certain product. The influence of advertising on our food choices can be positive or negative. In a study conducted by the University of Minnesota School of Public Health in 1998, they viewed three hours of television on five major networks for three weeks, on Saturday mornings. They found that commercials were shown an average of nineteen times an hour with eleven percent of those being for food. Approximately 11 billion dollars was spent on food advertising in magazines, newspapers, television, and radio in 1997, according to the American Dietetic Association. Forty-two percent of the food commercials were high in fat and sugar with foods being candy, soft drinks, and pastries. Of the 42%, 23 of the commercials were for cereals that were high in sugar.

Advertising costs money. Billions of dollars are spent on food advertising. The people buying the food-the consumers-pay for this. Nationally advertised items usually cost more than store brands and brands that are not nationally advertised.

- Most people are more likely to buy fancy and eye-catching packaging.
- People are very brand loyal and will often buy a product even if it cost more.

Some of the themes that advertisers use to get our attention are:

- **Family**  
Advertisers try to get you to use their products based on your love for your family. This works well because family is important to many people, especially the women who are the caregiver in most families.
- **Health**  
This theme focuses on the positive health effects of using certain products. This works because people care about their health. When Kellogg's added health claims to their high fiber cereal, the sales increased forty-seven percent in the first six months.
- **Sex Appeal**  
Sex appeal sells a product. Many people want to believe that they too will be beautiful and sexy if they use the product.
- **Humor**  
A funny situation often helps people to remember the product.
- **Appearance**  
Food advertisers show food that may look better than the real thing. This makes people want to try the product.

- Famous people

Famous people are used to sell a product. They also can have a celebrity use a product in a television show or movie. When the trade association for milk promoted the generic advertising “Got Milk” with celebrities wearing milk mustaches, the consumption of milk increased by forty-seven pounds of milk for every dollar spent on advertising.

Advertising can be helpful because it tells people about different products they can buy. But ads also can get people to buy products that they do not need, cannot afford, or think are better than they really are.

### **Activity**

#### **Advertisement Savvy**

Bring a variety of magazines or a variety of food advertisements to the group meeting. Have participants look through the magazines and count the number of food advertisements and the type of foods advertised. What is the number of food ads in each magazine? Discuss the advertisements as to what the advertisers are using to get the attention of consumers. How do these advertisements affect them in regards to buying the foods?

*What are some questions you can ask yourself when you are trying to decide what brand to buy?*  
Allow 4-5 minutes for responses.

Here are some suggested questions if participants to help participants to think of some questions.

- Is there a less expensive product that serves the same purpose?
- Have I compared the products’ nutrition label with an item that cost less?
- Am I buying it because it comes in a nice package?
- Am I buying it because the product says it will make me look better or help me lose weight?
- Am I buying it because I have a coupon or because it’s on sale?
- Do I really need it?
- Can I afford it, even with a coupon?
- Can I wait until it goes on sale?

Convenience foods are also striving to be healthier, but it is important to read the nutrition facts for the amount of fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and calories as well as the ingredients list to check for the type of fat and other ingredients that is used in the convenience food.

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