

MEAL PLANNING AND SHOPPING FOR OLDER ADULTS



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MICHIGAN HOME SKILLS ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

Meal Planning and Shopping For Older Adults

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Meal Planning and Shopping for Older Adults

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Meal Planning and Shopping for Older Adults

Introduction for Trainers

Direct care workers play an important role in helping older adults maintain their independence. They assist with a variety of important tasks which may include meal planning or grocery shopping. Buying food may be challenging if the older adult does not have an appetite or enough money to purchase food. Meal planning becomes very important. In order to shop efficiently, and buy what the older adult needs to stay healthy and well nourished, a direct care worker must be aware of:

- The preferences of the older adult
- The foods already in the house
- Choosing a variety of foods
- Selecting the most nutritious foods

This module will prepare the direct care worker to address the challenges of helping the older adults make nutritious choices for meal planning. Specific topics include how to assist the older adult in meal planning by:

- Understanding basic nutrition principles
- Identifying the unique nutritional needs of older adults
- Incorporating the principles of variety, balance, calorie control and moderation
- Applying these principles when shopping to purchase healthy foods that are within the older adult's budget

The direct care worker will learn how to talk to older adults to discover their preferences. Basic nutritional principles will be discussed that will help the direct care worker to make more healthy food choices.

Goals

As a result of participating in this module, the direct care worker will be able to:

1. Recognize and appreciate the basic nutritional needs of older adults.
2. Use the food guide pyramid to plan a week of nutritious meals for older adults.
3. Prepare a food shopping list to use best practices.
4. Read food labels and adopt other shopping principles to determine the most nutritious, cost effective choices.

This Program is Three (3) Hours

In planning to present this module, please consider contacting your local MSU Extension Office. The MSU Extension Educator may be willing to attend the class and present some of the information. This is their area of expertise and they have a wealth of knowledge to share. They also may have artificial foods or cards with different foods that show true portions. To find the local MSU **Extension office, check your local phone book, or go to <http://www.msue.msu.edu/portal>.**

If the local MSU Extension Office has questions, they may contact Joyce McGarry, Ingham County Extension Educator at mcgarryj@msu.edu or 517-887-4587.

Supplies

1. Flip chart and markers
2. A laptop computer with a data projector or an overhead projector
3. Copies of handouts
4. Food labels for demonstration like cereal boxes and other food packages that have a lot of fiber, sugar, or salt.
5. Food scale
6. Measuring spoons
7. Sugar and salt for demonstration

	Section	Activity	Handout	Amount Of Time
1	Welcome	Introductions	Agenda Do You Eat a Variety of Foods?	10 minutes
2	Why Older Adults Need Assistance	Brainstorming Session	PowerPoint handout (3 boxes per page)	15 minutes
3	Nutrition and the Direct Care Worker	Small group work	MyPyramid - Steps to a Healthier You Portion Size Kit Food Sources of Vitamin A Food Sources of Vitamin C High Fiber Foods Food Sources of Calcium Non-Dairy Food Sources of Calcium	30 minutes
4	Nutrition for Older Adults		Determine Your Nutritional Health Tufts Food Guide Pyramid for Older Adults --Written Description Modified MyPyramid for Older Adults	40 minutes

	Section	Activity	Handout	Amount Of Time
5	Meal Planning	Role Play Small group exercise	Role Play Food Preference Checklist Weekly Meal Planner Variety for A Day	40 minutes
6	Shopping Strategies	Brainstorm Session Group Discussion Demonstration	Shopping List with Recommended Foods Nutrition Fact Sheet on Food Labels	35 minutes
7.	Evaluation			10 minutes

MEAL PLANNING AND SHOPPING FOR OLDER ADULTS

Curriculum

1. Welcome and Introductions	10 minutes
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- (i) When the direct care workers arrive, give them the handout, “How Well Do You Add Variety to Your Diet?” Ask them to set it aside when they are finished.
- (ii) Welcome the participants.
- (iii) Introduce the trainers and then have the participants introduce themselves. Ask them to tell the group about the setting where they work, how long they have been planning meals and/or shopping for older adults.
- (iv) Review the Agenda. Invite the participants to identify any topic that they would like to see covered.
- (v) Put the expectations on the flip chart.
- (vi) Encourage participation and questions during class. The levels of experience among the group members will vary. We want to acknowledge that those who have been doing this job for many years have wisdom and experience to share.

Handouts

Agenda

Power Point Handout (3 boxes per page)

2. Older Adults Need Assistance	15 minutes
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As a person gets older, the desire to remain independent is strong. Chronic disease and sensory impairments can affect the older adult’s ability to function.

A functional assessment looks at a person’s ability to do their Activities of Daily Living or ADLs. These include normal activities people perform daily including walking, bathing, toileting, dressing, transferring and being able to feed your self.

In order to remain independent, other skills are necessary. Instrumental Activities of Daily Living or IADLs measure a person’s abilities to do these things:

- Shopping
- Transportation
- Telephone use
- Preparation of meals
- Taking medications
- Managing money
- Cleaning
- Doing laundry

Many older adults are choosing to remain in their own homes or in a community-based setting instead of a nursing home. They may be able to do some of the above things for themselves, but they may need help with others.

The direct care worker works in their home to complete household tasks. Filling in the gaps helps older adults to remain in their own homes. Since nutrition plays an important role in helping the older adult remain as healthy as possible, this training program will help the direct care worker understand the basics about the nutritional needs of older adults.

Activity **Brainstorm Session With Flip Chart**

Discussion Question:

What have you seen in working with older adults that concerns you in the area of nutrition?

Some answers may include:

- The older adult **may not eat many meals** per day.
- They may **eat the same things** every day.
- They may **not want to drink fluids** because they are concerned about using the bathroom.
- There may be a **lack of fruits and vegetables** in their diet.
- Many older adults are unable to **drive and depend on friends, family or public transportation to get to the store.**
- Older adults with **chronic diseases** are often too frail, or lack the energy to navigate a busy store.
- An individual may have **vision problems** which makes reading food labels difficult.
- Taking on the **role of shopping for someone else with specific preferences** can be challenging for a direct care worker. A person may not like what is purchased, or ask for foods that are clearly unhealthy for them.
- They may **not have enough money** to buy the food they need at the grocery store.
- The older adult may not eat enough protein because they do not like the taste of meat anymore.

3. Nutrition and The Direct Care Worker

30 minutes

The purpose of the MyPyramid is to provide guidelines to assist people in choosing foods for a balanced diet so they can obtain all of the nutrients they need. The Pyramid

is divided into main food groups, each of which has a specific range of servings to obtain daily. Foods high in sugar have empty calories, or calories that provide no nutrition. These foods need to be eaten in moderation.

Activity **Nutrition For The Direct Care Worker**

Give the participants the following handouts:

- MyPyramid
- Steps to a Healthier You
- Recommended Daily Servings

As a group, review MyPyramid. Using the handouts, look at the various food groups, suggested number of servings and provide serving sizes. The base of the pyramid is whole or raw foods. Processed foods are at the top and eaten in small amounts. The figure on the side represents exercise that should be considered part of a daily routine.

- salt, less than 2300 mg or 1tsp
- limit sugar to 4 grams, or 1tsp

Handout

Portion Size Kit

(You may want to show examples, such as a slice of bread and a CD case. The visuals really help bring the point across.)

MSU Extension staff may have cards with different foods that have nutrition labels, or artificial food props that they may offer the trainer to borrow for the training.

Divide participants into pairs or small groups.

Have the class look at the handout that they filled out before class.

Do You Eat a Variety of Foods?

Write the following questions on the flip chart:

- 1. How well are they meeting their nutritional needs?**
- 2. Which food groups do the participants need to try harder to incorporate into their diets?**

Debrief as a large group.

Ask for comments from the group that they feel comfortable sharing. How many of the participants had breakfast today? Did they have lunch? (Direct care workers may nurture others, but they may not take care of themselves.)

4. Nutrition For Older Adults

30 minutes

Brainstorm Session

What are some of the factors that affect an older adult's ability to have proper nutrition?

Some answers may include:

- **Diminished sense of taste and smell**, which makes food less appealing.
- **Decrease in saliva production**, which can contribute to dry mouth.
- **Reduced sense of thirst**, which can increase risk for dehydration.
- **Diminished sensitivity to the four primary tastes** in this order: sweet, sour, bitter and salty.
- Fats have a lot of flavor, so they may be more appealing.
- As we age, **our bodies need fewer calories. Our need for nutrients does not decrease, and for some nutrients our need increases.** It is important to eat a **variety of foods that are nutrient dense.** Nutrient dense means the nutritional value is high for the amount of calories it contains. For example, orange juice has many nutrients for the calories it contains-- while a donut has many calories, but few nutrients.
- Older adults **don't require as many calories**, but their **need for key vitamins and minerals may remain the same or may increase.**
- A healthy immune system needs a variety of nutrients. As a person ages, **they become more susceptible to infections.**
- As a person ages, the **composition of their body changes. Lean body mass decreases** and they have more adipose tissue or fat; while the percentage of water decreases.
- There is **thinning of the limbs** and increased fat deposits in the abdominal area.
- **Medications** may increase or decrease appetite, cause changes in how foods taste, and/or contribute to dry mouth, constipation, diarrhea, or nausea.
- **Depression may develop** due to isolation, death of a spouse or chronic pain, which may influence nutritional intake.
- **Problems with swallowing, poor dental hygiene** or ill fitting dentures can make eating difficult.
- They may be **unable to afford food**, and refuse home-delivered meals or food stamps due to false misconceptions that can contribute to poor nutrition.
- **Chronic diseases** like heart problems, diabetes or digestive problems like acid reflux, affect what and how much a person can eat.
- A person with dementia may be **unable to plan meals** or remember to eat.
- **Poor appetite** may be caused by chronic disease, depression, loneliness, and inactivity. When intake is poor, nutrition is also poor.

- Older adults may have **difficulty walking or standing** and may be unable to shop or stand on their feet long enough to prepare meals.
- **Eating alone** can be difficult. It may seem too big of a task to prepare a balanced meal for oneself. The simple task of just opening a can of food to stave off hunger might be all a person has the energy and appetite to do.

Distribute the Handout: “Determine Your Nutritional Health”

Explain to the class that this is an example of a way that an older adult is evaluated by professionals. Go over the front and back of the handout and allow time for questions or comments.

Review of Key Nutrients

Calcium keeps bones and teeth strong and may help to regulate blood pressure. As we get older, our body’s ability to absorb calcium declines and we lose calcium from our bones more quickly. Good sources of calcium include dairy products and yogurt, canned salmon, green leafy vegetables, whole grains, beans and peas, nuts and fortified soy foods. Calcium-fortified orange juice is also available. Calcium supplements should be spread out throughout the day. Milk can be the beverage for a meal or snack; smoothies with milk or yogurt and fruit can be made for breakfast or a snack.

Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium and phosphorus. As we get older, our body is less able to make Vitamin D due to decreased sun exposure. Vitamin D is found in salmon and sardines. Many foods are fortified with this vitamin, including some cereals, yogurt, soy and cow’s milk.

Folate is a B Vitamin that helps guard against heart disease, and may help brain function. Since risk of heart disease increases as we get older, getting enough Folate is very important. Older adults are at risk for being deficient in Folate because the stomach has a lower acid level. Some prescription drugs sometimes change the level of acidity in the digestive tract. This decreases the ability to absorb this vitamin. Older adults may have trouble absorbing this vitamin so a supplement or eating fortified cereals may be necessary. A B-12 injection may be required. These contribute to low Folate levels. Good sources include leafy, green vegetables such as spinach and turnip greens, dry beans and peas, fortified cereals and grain products, and some fruits and vegetables such as cantaloupe and oranges. Flours and grains produced in the USA are fortified.

Zinc helps to promote a healthy immune system, assist in wound healing and is important for normal taste perception. People who are deficient in Zinc may complain about the saltiness, sourness, bitterness or sweetness of foods. Zinc is available from sources of protein such as meats, eggs, peas and beans, nuts and milk.

Protein is important for the immune system, preventing muscle loss, and promotes healing. Many older adults lose their taste for meat. Some cannot afford lean cuts of meat. If a person has dental problems or arthritis, they may not be able to chew meat

or cut it up. Lentils, tofu, nuts, seeds, beans and peas provide protein for people who do not like meat. Tuna fish is an easy way to add protein; other fish baked or broiled is low in fat. One egg per day is acceptable; eggs are nutrient dense and low in cost.

Water is important because dehydration can result in constipation, fecal impactions, cognitive impairment, functional decline, or even death. Older adults need at least 6-8 glasses of water per day. Water, 100% fruit juices, milk, vegetable juice and soup all can be counted. Adequate fluids are necessary for proper absorption and excretion of medications.

Older adults need plenty of **fiber** in their diets. Fiber is found in fresh fruits and vegetables, dried fruits, whole grains breads, nuts and seeds. Fiber helps with digestion, may prevent constipation, colon cancer, decrease heart disease, and help control blood sugar.

Activity: Review of Food Pyramid Guide for Older Adults

Tufts University has developed a Food Guide Pyramid for Older Adults.

<http://nutrition.tufts.edu>

Handouts

- 1. Tufts Food Guide Pyramid for Older Adults-Written Description**
- 2. Modified MyPyramid for Older Adults**

Group Discussion

Spend several minutes discussing the handouts, giving examples from each category and the additional information provided on the right side of Tufts Food Guide Pyramid for Older Adults—Written Description. Look at the Food Guide Pyramid that we reviewed for ourselves. How is it different?

Some of the answers you may hear include:

- Water is at the base of the Pyramid. Eight or more glasses are recommended.
- At the top of the Pyramid, saturated and trans fat, sugar and salt should be used sparingly.
- Supplements of Calcium, Vitamin D and B-12 are also recommended.

Brainstorm Session

What strategies do you have to help improve the nutrition for older adults that you care for?

Write answers on the flip chart. They may include the following:

- Remaining **physically active** has many benefits for older adults. It can improve chronic diseases like heart disease and high blood pressure, diabetes,

osteoporosis, and obesity. Staying active also increases the appetite and helps digestion.

- Some people can't eat three meals a day. They prefer to **eat more frequently and have smaller servings.**
- It takes a little more effort and planning for a person to have a balanced meal. **Planning what you are going to have ahead of time** helps to avoid impulse shopping and choosing things that are not healthy. Spending time thinking about meals and the ingredients before shopping saves time. Knowing what you will have for the day **allows time for things to thaw from the freezer.**
- Getting enough fluids is very important and can be a challenge. **Six to eight glasses of fluids per day is recommended.** Water is the best fluid of all. A slice of lemon and ice can make a glass of water more appealing. Other fluids are milk, 100% fruit juice, and decaffeinated beverages.
- There are a variety of **healthy frozen meals** available. They are helpful at times when an older adult does not have the energy to cook. Check the labels for fat and salt content. The containers should not be saved and reused. Use only microwave safe dishes, not margarine or cottage cheese tubs, or styrofoam containers.
- The **Home-Delivered Meals** program provides a hot, well-balanced lunch to older adults in most communities five days per week. Some programs offer an additional evening meal or frozen meals for the weekend, holidays or bad weather. In order to receive home-delivered meals, a person must meet certain eligibility requirements and be evaluated by an agency like the Commission or Council on Aging. Regional Area Agencies on Aging can provide information about meal programs for your community.
- **Congregate meals** are served at lunch time in many senior centers during the week. The opportunity for an older adult to socialize with their peers is an added bonus to the well-balanced meals. Some centers serve breakfast, dinner or Sunday meals. Regional Area Agencies on Aging can provide information for your local area.
- If an older person has a **poor appetite**, they should be **evaluated by their doctor.** **Loss of appetite can be caused by various medications,** depression, physical illness or dental problems.
- **Nutritionally balanced drinks** are available in a variety of flavors. Many taste like milk shakes and provide the nutrients of a well-balanced meal. New packaging and flavors have made these drinks more appealing. Older adults should check with their doctor.
- Herbs add flavor to foods and are a great substitute for using salt. Dried or fresh herbs can be used. A small herb garden is easy to maintain. There is no substitute for fresh herbs to perk up a dish. Herbs that are easy to grow include parsley, sage, oregano, thyme, basil and chives. These flavors may be something they remember from their childhoods. The fresh, sharp flavors are stimulating to taste buds.

5. Meal Planning**40 minutes**

Before going to the grocery store for an older adult, some planning is important. Save time and money by taking a few minutes to think about what the older adult needs, what meals will be prepared, and what is already on hand.

**Activity
Role Play**

Recruit two volunteers to read the scripted role play. Give copies to each person and read the narrative.

Discussion questions:

1. How did Mary and Mrs. Right feel?
2. How did the approach of the worker affect the conversation?

Besides checking the refrigerator and cupboards before shopping, what other things do the participants do when planning shopping trips for older adults?

Here are some things they might contribute:

- **Take time to talk to the person** and find out what they like to eat. Each individual has unique preferences. Encourage a variety of fruits and vegetables based on their tastes.
- **Ask the person if they have any meals planned**, and if they have the food they need to use up. If cooking for them that day, make sure that you have what is needed.
- **After checking the cupboards and refrigerator** for foods already on hand, make a list of only what is needed.
- **Communicate** with the older adult so that you purchase the things they want and they will get what they expect.
- All stores have **specials**. Plan to go to only one store for your shopping as this can save time and gas.
- Use **newspaper ads** to find weekly specials and store coupons. Sit down with the older adult at the kitchen table and go over the ads. Use a magic marker to circle the specials that the person would like. Look at the meat and poultry specials and see if anything could be used for the meals being planned.
- When making a list, **put foods together** the way they are arranged in the grocery store. This makes it easier to shop and you will avoid buying more than you need.
- Buy **refrigerated and frozen foods last** to avoid spoilage or melting. Stick to the list and avoid going to the store hungry.

Give the participants time to discuss their challenges, such as the older adult not eating breakfast, eating the same thing every day, and the lack of fresh vegetables in their diets. They may want to discuss the role of Home-delivered Meals or Commodity Foods and how it affects the shopping and the nutrition of the older adult.

Activity

Filling Out Food Preference Checklist

(Handout: Food Preference Checklist)

Divide the participants into pairs. One person will be the older adult and the other the direct care worker. Have them interview the older adult and fill out the food preference checklist.

Allow 15 minutes, then bring the group together and ask about their reaction to the checklist.

Handouts

1. Variety for a Day 2
2. Weekly Meal Planner

Using the Variety for a Day handout, ask the participants to suggest breakfasts, lunches and dinners that older adults like.

After 5-8 minutes, use the flip chart to write their suggestions. Brainstorm how to add more fruits and vegetables, getting at least 3 food groups for each meal or snack.

Distribute the handout Weekly Meal Planner. This can be filled in and used when the worker is planning shopping trips with the older adult in the future. It could also be shared with another worker who is coming into the home to provide services.

Remember to “eat a rainbow” every time, including brightly colored fruits and vegetables. Every meal and mini-meal or snack should have 3 of the food groups.

6. Shopping Strategies

35 minutes

Brainstorm Session

What are some shopping strategies that you use?

Write answers on the flip chart.

Answers may include:

- **Avoid the temptation to buy extras.** Before buying the biggest size, consider whether it can be used, and if there is adequate storage space for the item.
- Use a **store map** to find items more easily
- Only **buy what is on your list.** Impulse buying will drive up the grocery bill fast.
- Try not to stop by the grocery store every day to pick up a few things. **Shop weekly** using the in-store coupons.
- Don't shop when hungry. A person is more likely to buy things not on the list.
- Stay within your **food budget.**
- Plan for leftovers.
- Check higher and lower shelves for less costly items.
- Put meat, fish and poultry into **plastic bags** before they go into your cart. Juices that drip from the packaging contain bacteria.
- Pay attention when checking out that you are being charged correctly. **Watch for mistakes, and count change.**
- **Each agency should have a policy regarding shopping for clients.**
- Using a blank signed check is an unsafe practice, and puts the worker and client at risk if it is lost.
- It is never a good practice to pay for items for yourself such as a candy bar or soft drink with the client's money.

Handout

1. **Shopping List with Recommended Foods.**
(Review the shopping list and discuss how it could be filled out when planning for meals and trips to the grocery store.)

Activity **Reading Food Labels**

(Handout: Nutrition Fact Sheet on Food Labels)

1. Give each participant a cereal box or other package with a food label. Go through each section, talking about serving size, and looking at specific nutrients.
2. Focus on the amount of fiber in the serving size, discussing the challenge of getting 26 grams of fiber daily.
3. Look at the amount of salt and sugar per serving. Show or measure the sugar in cereal or a soft drink to demonstrate the amount these items contain. Have a participant come up and measure out the amount of sugar in a serving of a soft drink or cereal serving.
4. Look at the packaging and see if there is a freshness date

Freshness Dates

Dates on packages mean different things, depending on the wording. All products in the grocery store are marked with a freshness date. This tells the day and month, and sometimes year by which the store must sell the product and still ensure that it is fresh.

- **Expiration Dates** tell the end of the product's useful life or the last date that it can be used.
- The **Sell By Date** on breads and fresh baked goods indicated the last date that the item can be sold as fresh. The foods are usually still safe to eat, usually for 5 to 7 days. You also see these on packages of meat and poultry. Don't buy any food that smells bad, is moldy or the seal or packaging is broken.
- Dry goods such as cereals have dates that read **Best If Used By**____. Cereals keep better than bread, but buy them well before their freshness date. After the date listed, the food will start to lose its flavor or decrease in quality. Keep them in a tightly closed container.
- **Packaging Date** tells the date of manufacturing, processing or final packing. The product is usually good for 12 to 18 months from that date.

How to Choose “Fresh” Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables can be fresh in-season, canned, low sodium, or frozen. Choose fresh fruits and vegetables that will be eaten within 3 days. Sometimes it is difficult to pick out a ripe cantaloupe or peach. One strategy for choosing fresh fruits and vegetables is to get to know the head of the produce department at your local grocery store. Ask that person what is fresh today, or how things taste. That person would be happy to help you select a ripe cantaloupe if asked.

Frozen foods can be convenient. They are cooked for a shorter amount of time and use a smaller amount of water, which prevents nutrient loss.

Many older adults like canned fruits and vegetables. Fruits that are packed in their own juices have less sugar. If the canned vegetables are rinsed, it will reduce the amount of sodium.

Resources

The following resources were used in developing this module:

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