

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2012 NC Cooperative Extension Clay County

Mother Learns the Benefits of Meal Planning

Americans living fast-paced lives often overlook the advantages of meal planning. To remind participants of the benefits of organizing meals at the beginning of the week, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) emphasizes how meal planning saves money and time, and encourages families to eat the healthy meals.

Upon graduating from the program, one Clay County participant admitted that prior to EFNEP she had not realized the benefits of planning her family's meals. But by practicing what she had learned, she realized both the financial and nutritional benefits of consistently planning her meals each week.

Financially, she has saved money in two ways. One way is by making a grocery list and only buying the food items she needs to make her meals at the grocery store. Secondly, planning meals have reduced gasoline expenses because she had made fewer trips to the grocery store.

Nutritionally, meal planning has ensured that her family's meals followed MyPlate recommendations. She now purposely includes more fruits, vegetables, dairy and whole grains in her family's meal plans. She has also incorporated other EFNEP lessons in her daily life, including using cooking methods that reduced the number of calories found in the foods she prepared. When serving her meals, she is now conscientious about the portion sizes she offers.

Through these efforts, this EFNEP participant realized the benefits of family meal planning because they make financial and nutritional sense. Planning has directly related to a less stressful mealtime preparation experience for her. In addition, when looking into the future, meal planning will play a key role in assuring her family stays in good health.

Mother with High Blood Pressure Learns How to Read Food Labels

Learning how to read the Nutrition Facts Label can be very beneficial to families who want to make healthy food choices. The FDA regulates the nutrient information found on the food labels, which can help families compare similar food products to determine the best buy nutritionally. FDA regulation can also help people confidently determine if a particular food product can safely fall into a specific meal plan. For example, by reading the food label, consumers can learn how much sodium, fat, sugar and cholesterol is contained in the food they want to purchase. But this important information will only be useful if people know how to read the labels and understand their importance.

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) conducted in Clay County delivers a lesson designed to teach WIC clients how to read the Nutrition Facts Label. To date, 60% of the graduates are now reading and understanding food labels. One graduate with high blood pressure now knows how to avoid purchasing foods high in sodium, and another with diabetes now knows how to avoid purchasing foods high in sugar. Overall, the graduates agreed they are making healthier food choices. They claim that their improved label reading skills have not only made it easier for them to follow their special diets, but also allowed them to confidently get the most nutritionally for less money.



EFNEP helps address the challenges limited resource families face when introducing healthy changes through nutrition education, cooking classes, exercise strategies, and shopping on a limited budget.

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