

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2012 NC Cooperative Extension Macon County

Mother Learns How to Decrease the Risk of Foodborne Illness

Improper food handling results in wasted food and lost dollars. Both result in food security issues. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) in Macon County has discovered that many families are wasting food and losing money daily due to improperly handling.

During a recent EFNEP lesson, one mother shared that she thawed meat on the kitchen counter or in hot water for 6-8 hours before preparing it for dinner. After dinner, she left the cooked meat on the counter several hours before refrigerating it. Sometimes, she left the cooked meat out all night. Before participating in EFNEP, she never associated these practices with the amount of spoiled meat she discarded. She did realize, however, that the amount of spoiled meat she was discarding was costly. She had little food and no money by month's end.

To help resolve this issue, the EFNEP program assistant shared with the participant proper food handling practices. She visually showed her how rapidly harmful bacteria can grow on meat reaching the "temperature danger zone" and explained meat reaching these harmful temperatures could put her family at risk of contracting a foodborne illness.

The program assistant also taught the young mother that planning meals would allow her to purchase meat in advance and freeze it until needed. Because her meals were planned, she could defrost meat in the refrigerator a day or two in advance, eliminating the threat of it reaching the "danger zone" as it did when thawing on the counter.

This young mother, who is now using safe food handling practices learned in EFNEP, has decreased the threat of her family contracting a foodborne illness. She has also helped secure her family's food by eliminating waste. Dollars saved from purchasing less meat are now being used for other family needs.

Pregnant Woman Learns How to Use Her WIC Credits to Increase Her Iron and Protein

In Macon County, a pregnant WIC client approached the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) with a concern. Test results had determined her iron and protein levels were low. Knowing that iron and protein deficiencies are linked to a higher risk of pre-term delivery and low birth weight, she needed guidance in bringing both nutrients to healthy pregnancy levels.

The EFNEP program assistant began helping the young mother by pointing out those iron and protein rich foods listed on her WIC vouchers. For example, the vouchers included fresh spinach and other dark green leafy vegetables, which are high in iron. They also listed eggs, dried beans and peas, which are high in protein.

In an effort to show the young mother how easy it would be to incorporate these foods into her daily diet, the program assistant shared



EFNEP's Spinach Omelet and Fiesta Bean Salad recipes. She explained that the spinach and eggs found in the Spinach Omelet would provide iron and protein. The beans found in the Fiesta Bean Salad contained both iron and protein. She then walked the young mother through the preparation steps and shared a sample of the Fiesta Bean Salad.

A few days later, the WIC mother called the EFNEP program assistant to say she had been preparing and eating EFNEP recommended recipes at home. She was hoping that by being more conscientious about selecting, preparing and eating foods high in iron and protein she could rebuild her low stores to safe levels and reduce the risk of delivering a pre-term or underweight baby. Her conscientious efforts were successful. A post-partum visit to WIC documented that this young mother delivered a full-term, healthy weight baby several months later.

Fifth Graders Learn Healthy Habits

Health and fitness are important for everyone regardless of their age. In an effort to support their students and families to become healthier and physically fit, the school administration at Mountain View Intermediate in Macon County asked Extension's 4-H EFNEP program assistant to teach a series of six lessons to their 5th grade classes.

Using dialogue and experiential learning strategies, the program assistant taught the children how to select a variety of nutritious foods. Through Glo Germ and black light experiments, she taught safe food handling, and by providing snack preparation and taste testing opportunities she promoted an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption. She also stressed the importance of incorporating 60 minutes of physical activity into each day.

At series end, pre/post behavior surveys showed that 88% of the 310 children participating in the program were eating a greater variety of foods; 91% had increased their nutrition knowledge; and 98% had increased their ability to select nutritious foods.

Students also shared their personal stories. One conveyed that she had encouraged her parents to defrost the meat they planned to eat for dinner in the refrigerator instead of on the counter. Another stated his family has changed from serving cookies for dessert to offering fruit with a scoop of yogurt instead. Another said that his family was now walking their new dog after dinner.

Collaborative efforts made by 4-H EFNEP and Mountain View Intermediate are working. The impacts realized are significant for two reasons. Firstly, research shows a balanced diet and being physically active help children grow, learn and have more energy. Secondly, the knowledge and behavior changes realized by the children are making their way home. The children are helping their families find the balance needed to live happier, healthier lifestyles.

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EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION
EDUCATION PROGRAM

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