

# EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

## 2015 NC Cooperative Extension Mecklenburg County



### Participants Increase Fruit and Vegetable Intake

Vitamins and minerals are known as micronutrients because the body needs them in such small amounts. Micronutrient deficiencies can result in anemia, susceptibility to infections, declining eye health, poor fetal development during pregnancy, and osteoporosis.

Fruits and vegetables are rich sources of micronutrients. Unfortunately, according to Mecklenburg County's most recent State of the County Health Report, in 2013 only 11% of the adults living in the county were consuming the recommended five or more fruit and vegetable servings per day. This percentage indicated a decrease when compared to previous years.

Working to reverse this trend, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) teams with local community agencies to teach limited income families how to increase their micronutrient intake by following the MyPlate recommendations for consuming a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables each day. Participants learn the suggested number of servings their family members need daily and a myriad of creative ways to ensure that number of servings is eaten.

Participants have the opportunity to prepare recipes that can be recreated and served at home as a way to encourage greater fruit and vegetable intake to their families.

Recently, a class of seven participants discussed how to increase the intake of fruits and vegetables in their own daily diets. Several admitted increasing their consumption would be a challenge, as they did not enjoy eating these foods. However, their opinion changed when they discovered the EFNEP smoothie recipe.

They found smoothies prepared from different varieties of fruits and vegetables could be a fun and tasty way to increase their intake. The zinc found in summer berries, iron in dark leafy vegetables, and vitamin A in carrots and squash took on an entirely different perspective when consumed in the form of a smoothie. Experimenting, they quickly learned seasonal varieties of fruits and vegetables would yield different tastes and textures, offering a different smoothie experience each time. Having tested several smoothie variations during EFNEP, all participants vowed to prepare their favorite versions at home for their families.

Becoming more knowledgeable about the vital role the consumption of fruits and vegetables play in providing the micronutrients needed for overall good health, this class of EFNEP participants did their part to increase the percentage of Mecklenburg County families who intake five or more fruit and vegetable servings a day.

#### References:

- 1 CDC IMMPaCt—International Micronutrient Malnutrition Prevention and Control Program
- 2 Micronutrient Facts (/impact/micronutrients/index.html) 2014 Mecklenburg County State of the County Health Report (pg.2)
- 3 Nutritional Deficiencies (Malnutrition) by Kati Blake. Published July 26, 2012. Retrieved on July 15, 2015. <http://www.healthline.com/health/malnutrition#Types2>

### Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Valued by Young Moms

When participating in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), Mecklenburg County families are introduced to MyPlate's nutrition and physical activity concepts and taught research-based application for living a healthy lifestyle.

Participants learn how to use the Nutrition Facts Label to make healthy food choices at the grocery store. EFNEP offers an entire class session of instruction on the value of correctly using this tool. It also offers hands-on cooking experiences so participants will use techniques that will ensure their healthy choices remain so once prepared. For example, participants learn to bake and broil rather than fry their food in oil, and to refrain from adding high calorie toppings to low calorie vegetables before serving.

But eating smart is only a part of the healthy lifestyle matrix. The science shows that along with making good nutritional choices, being active 30 minutes a day can help one maintain a healthy weight, strengthen their bones and muscles, improve their mental attitude and actually reduce the risk of dying early from heart disease or cancer. Participants learn that everyone can reap these benefits of physical activity. Size, shape or age do not matter. EFNEP offers suggestions on how to wisely break into a new active living routine or improve upon the level of activity they may already be experiencing. The incentive, those people who are physically active 7 hours a week will reduce their risk of dying early by 40% more than those doing less than 30 minutes a day.

One young mother recently stated that because of the nutritional concepts shared and the hands-on food preparation experienced at each session, she is now able to recreate healthy recipes for her family at home. She finds personal satisfaction in preparing meals that will provide the nutrients needed to keep them healthy.

Another participant, a single mother raising two school-age children, stated that as a result of her positive lifestyle change in the area of physical activity, her teenage son had enrolled in an exercise class. She attributes that success to applying of knowledge gleaned in EFNEP to their everyday lives.

Pre and post program surveys documented that 100% of EFNEP's participants improved in at least one nutrition practice, and 29% improved in their physical activity behaviors. Impacts like these imply EFNEP families in Mecklenburg County will continue to make healthy lifestyle decisions. Eating smart and moving more will ensure they are at work, in school, and contributing to the value of community life for years to come.

#### Resource:

<http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/pa-health/>

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