

EFNEP SUCCESS STORIES

2015 NC Cooperative Extension Transylvania County County



Fourth Graders Learn Food Safety for a Happy, Healthy Thanksgiving

According to the Centers for Disease Control, an estimated 1 in 6 Americans becomes sick from a foodborne illness annually. Not only is contracting a foodborne illness an unpleasant experience, it can be dangerous, sometimes resulting in hospitalization or even death. Foodborne illness can also be expensive. Estimated costs of foodborne illness in the US are approximately \$152 billion annually. Fortunately, observing simple food safety rules can greatly reduce the risk of contracting a foodborne illness.

In Transylvania County, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) partnered with the local schools to teach children the importance of practicing food safety rules. To maximize the effectiveness of their efforts, the partners chose to present the EFNEP food safety lesson in the days leading up to Thanksgiving. They felt the children would more likely be involved in food preparation, clean up, and storage during the holiday season. After showing the class a food safety video, the EFNEP program assistant facilitated a brainstorming activity in which the students discussed ways they could implement the USDA's Fight Bac rules at home. By practicing the clean, separate, cook and chill rules at home they would keep their families' food safe during the Thanksgiving holiday.

When the students returned from Thanksgiving break they reported food safety successes ranging from washing hands before engaging in food preparation to helping their parents clean the kitchen. Several students helped bag their family's groceries when shopping making sure meats were kept separate from vegetables and fruits. Many shared that they reminded their families to put food away promptly, not allowing it to sit at room temperature where bacteria would quickly multiply. Some even said that they had helped reorganize the refrigerator so the turkey could thaw on the bottom shelf.

All these actions helped the students reduce the risk of their families becoming sick from a foodborne illness. By continuing to use Fight Bac's food safety rules, they will further help keep their family's food safe to eat.

Resources:

<http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/facts.html> retrieved 2/2/2015.

<http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/archived-projects/produce-safety-project?id=0008> retrieved 2/4/2015.

<http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/0001/01/01/healthrelated-costs-from-foodborne-illness-in-the-united-states> retrieved 2/4/2015.

http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/food/food_safety/handling/hgic3607.html retrieved 2/4/2015.

Eating at Home Makes a Big Difference

In January of 2015, for the first time ever recorded, Americans spent more money on eating out than on eating at home. The Scientific Report of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Committee states that on average, 33% of calories are consumed outside of the home. When compared to eating at home, eating away is associated with increased caloric intake and poorer dietary quality. If the calories are from fast food establishments, then increases in body weight, body mass index (BMI) and risk of obesity are often observed.

Given the trend of Americans increasingly eating meals away from home, and knowing the implication on diet quality, Transylvania County EFNEP partnered with a local food pantry and church to provide a series of classes on nutrition, shopping, and cooking basics. The series included a hands-on cooking experience, grocery store tour, and kitchen equipment incentive. Each participant completing the series received a skillet and spatula.

At the beginning of the series, one participant reported that she ate most of her meals at fast food restaurants. She rarely cooked at home. Her initial 24-hour dietary recall revealed that she consumed 3,451 calories a day, more than three times the recommended daily intake for sodium, and almost twice the daily recommended amount of saturated fat. Despite the additional calories consumed, she had not met the recommended 3.5 servings of vegetables, and had consumed no servings of fruit.

Upon completing the EFNEP series, her dietary recall reflected substantial improvements in her nutritional intake. By learning to cook and eat at home, she had reduced her caloric intake by 1,000 calories, doubled her vegetable intake, and increased her fruit consumption well beyond the recommended minimum. She also reduced her sodium intake by 43% and saturated fat by 74%. The participant reported that because of EFNEP she now has the knowledge, equipment and confidence needed to prepare healthy meals at home every day.

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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info@ncefnep.net • www.ncefnep.org