

February 2019

Healthy Food, Healthy Brain

Background Information for Facilitators

Are you familiar with DASH and Mediterranean Diets? What do you remember about them?

Well, there's a "new healthy diet on the block" and it has people pretty excited. It's called the MIND diet. There's excitement because eating the diet over time could reduce a person's risk of developing Alzheimer's. And just like the DASH and Mediterranean diets, it tastes great!

The medical research center that developed the MIND diet created a special website. Please check it out now before you start preparing for this month's discussion.

www.rush.edu/news/diet-may-help-prevent-alzheimers

More about MIND diet:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/eating-these-foods-may-slow-brain-aging-by-75-years_55c21e95e4b0138b0bf4841d

[Interview with lead scientist for MIND study](#)

[Save Your Brain - Iowa Department of Public Health](#)

Behavior Goals

Participants will:

1. Identify two foods that support brain health and eat them more often.

Meeting Preparation

1. Order newsletters.
2. Review all of the newsletter content. Send questions to your coordinator.
3. Practice making blueberry syrup, if you want to sample it.
4. Determine if your local store(s) sell frozen blueberries and become familiar with the products. Compare costs for a one-cup serving of frozen vs. fresh blueberries.
5. Gather props.

! The suggested wording for the presentation is in regular font and the **facilitator directions are in bold, dark red italic**. It's best not to read the presentation, but to use your own words, staying close to the meaning.

Props

- Frozen blueberries – two or three per person; you can bring different sizes if they are available in your store(s)

PRESENTATION

Follow up to last month's meeting

In January, we talked about inflammation.

- Can anyone tell me the difference between acute and chronic inflammation? ***Acute = short-lived, swollen/red tissue, body's natural healing response; chronic = occurs inside tissues and around organs, almost invisible, linked to other diseases like heart disease, arthritis, and diabetes***
- What are some of the ways to help reduce chronic inflammation in our bodies? ***Eating foods high in antioxidants (anti-inflammatory diet), maintaining regular physical activity, drinking lots of water, not smoking.***
- Can anyone name some foods that are considered anti-inflammatory? ***Whole grains, beans, nuts, colorful fruits and vegetables, plant oils, cold-water fish like albacore tuna, salmon and mackerel, etc.***
 - Have you incorporated any of these into your diet since we last met?

Introduction

This month, we have an opportunity to do something that sounds almost a little crazy. We can decide to eat foods that have been shown to keep brains healthy—and maybe even lower the risk for Alzheimer's disease. ***Note: Be sensitive to the likelihood that someone at your meeting may have a form of dementia or early Alzheimer's—or has a family member with the disease.***

Nutrition Discussion

Let's look at the lead article, *Healthy Food, Healthy Brain*, on the first page of the newsletter. The MIND diet is based on sound diet research and includes foods shown to improve or maintain cognitive function—in other words, foods that support a “healthy brain.” The diet discourages foods that are potentially damaging.

So, what foods are in the amazing MIND diet? *Ask a volunteer to read the list of foods to include on the left side of the chart.* What are your reactions to this list of foods? *Allow time for feedback.*

Is there concern about cost? Point out tips from article on page 3, “MIND Diet Tips to Help Protect Your Brain and Your Budget.”

How does the MIND diet differ from the DASH and Mediterranean diets? The MIND diet recommends eating greens every day, it **emphasizes berries** and does not specify high fruit consumption or dairy. Today, we’re going to focus our discussion on **blueberries**.

Singing the Blues

Research shows that singing is really, really good for the brain. Point out article on page 4.

Let’s have a little fun to warm up this winter day. I’m going to divide our group into teams (divide room in half or by tables, whatever works best). I want you to think about songs with the word “blue” in the title or opening line. An example is *Blue Velvet*. I will give you a few minutes, and then I’ll ask each group to call out the name of one song. Each team should sing a few bars of the song. We’ll go around several times. If your team can’t think of a song, you’re out. The winning team will go through the meal line first. *Choose whatever “prize” is appropriate for your location; if you limit how much time they have to answer, the game should end quickly.*

Names of songs could include:

- Don’t It Make My Brown Eyes Blue
- Blue Suede Shoes
- Blue Moon
- Song Sung Blue, Everybody Knows One
- Me and You and a Dog Named Blue
- Blue Skies
- Baby’s Got Her Blue Jeans On
- Blue Hawaii
- Pretty Blue Eyes
- Lavender Blue
- Red Roses for a Blue Lady

A scientist who worked on the MIND study said, “Blueberries are one of the more potent foods in terms of protecting the brain.” And strawberries have performed pretty well in other studies. So why not eat them every day? *Cost, availability*

Berries can be expensive, particularly during the Iowa winter, but here's the good news: frozen berries are just as nutritious as fresh berries. And they are perfect for mixing into hot oatmeal on a snowy, cold morning.

Activities

Give a few frozen berries to each person. Some brands will have larger berries than others. Ask each person to put a frozen berry in their mouth and count how long it takes for it to thaw or soften. It shouldn't take long! That is why frozen berries can be easily added to dry or hot cereal, yogurt—you don't need to worry about thawing.

Brainstorm ways to use/eat frozen blueberries (or strawberries if they don't like blueberries).

Food Tasting

Option one:

Taste a small portion of mixed greens with a few fresh blueberries and walnuts. Use a light dressing of your choice. If you want to use frozen berries, try the salad at home first.

Option two:

Try this easy method to make a "berry syrup" from frozen berries:

1. Use a 2-cup, glass measuring cup or microwave-safe dish;
2. Pour 1 cup of frozen blueberries into the cup or dish;
3. Drizzle with honey;
4. Warm in microwave—try 30 second pulses and stir now and then until the berries are warm;
5. Pour or spoon over whole grain pancake or waffle.

Option three:

Make your favorite whole grain blueberry muffin using fresh or frozen berries.

Teaching Tips for Tasting

Facts About Blueberries:

- Blueberries are one of the most potent brain-protecting foods due to their high anthocyanin content.
- Blueberries can also help reduce blood pressure.

Tips for Cooking with Blueberries:

- Frozen blueberries are a cheaper yet equally healthy alternative to fresh, and make a great addition to salads, muffins and oatmeal.
- If baking with blueberries, keep oven temperature below 350 degrees to retain anthocyanin levels.

- Have leftover fresh berries? Place the plastic container of berries in the freezer until solid and then transfer to a plastic bag
- **Optional: Compare cost-per-cup between frozen and fresh blueberries.**

Warning: Berries can become hot in the microwave and burn your mouth. Let them cool if they appear hot.

Physical Activity

One of the key components to an ideal fitness program is core strength. A strong core helps reduce risk of falls, helps keep you mobile and improves posture. Try these core strengthening exercises, all done seated from your chair!

Seated roll backs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTxmh2X3PZA>

Seated marching

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2fsp3p0Buc>

More seated core exercises

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Ts-deSDnRM>

And remember, the best fitness program is the one you stick to! All movement counts!

Take Action

As we leave our meeting, let's think about the list of foods in the MIND diet. Which one would you like to eat more often or which one might you like to eat less often? If you are comfortable, tell us how you will try to do it. **Provide an example using the phrase: "I am going to feed my brain healthy foods this month. Next week, I want to _____."**



FRESH

CONVERSATIONS



What is the conversation about?

February Conversations

- Be MINDful about your diet
- Go blue with blueberries
- Sing for your health

When?

Where?

Contact:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Iowa Nutrition Network
Iowa Department of Public Health
(515) 281-6047

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Information & resources for seniors with home & family questions
ISU AnswerLine 1-800-262-3804