

ENERGIZING *the* DIABETES DIET

Dining with diabetes doesn't have to be drab—this new program dishes up tasty options

AN OLDER COUPLE MAKES IT AN ACTIVITY TO DO TOGETHER. Two women go to the event, standing in for their husbands. And a group of 11 women from a church in Allegheny County arrive with enthusiastic support. These individuals were participants in a Penn State Cooperative Extension pilot program designed to help people with Type 2 diabetes and their families prepare healthy and delicious meals that may mitigate some of the effects of the disease.

Type 2 diabetes—the most common type of diabetes in adults—results when the body does not make enough insulin or the body cannot use the insulin it produces. In 2005, the most recent year that data is available, there were an estimated 764,000 people with diabetes in Pennsylvania.

Uncontrolled diabetes can lead to a number of health issues, including kidney failure, blindness, heart disease and stroke. However, with proper testing, treatment and lifestyle changes, including increased exercise, Type 2 diabetes can be controlled.

That's where Extension's Dining with Diabetes program comes in. Coordinator Jill Cox explains that the four-week program with three-month follow-up helps people with the disease

understand tests for levels of blood sugar, blood pressure, lipids or fats, waist measurement, and microalbumin—an early warning for kidney problems.

The classes then address healthy eating as a strategy for controlling diabetes, and promote walking, exercise and other physical activities.

Recipes for Success

Using the "Idaho Plate" method, participants learn to visualize serving sizes. Half of a plate should be covered with vegetables. With recipes that include strawberry-spinach salad or mixed vegetable gratin, participants find that's not hard to do.

"They learn they can prepare meals with less fat, sugar and salt without cutting out taste," said Cox.

A quarter of the plate is devoted to proteins (almond-crusted fish or thick turkey chili, for example). Carbohy-



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Choose good carbs.

drates (such as lemon-rice pilaf or sweet-potato salad) and single servings of fruit and milk round out the meal.

A survey of pilot program participants showed that 92 percent improved their knowledge regarding the tests that help in controlling the risk of diabetes complications, and 82 percent gained knowledge regarding how carbohydrates affect blood sugar.

The pilot program, partially funded by grants from the Diabetes Prevention and Control Program at the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the United States Department of Agriculture, covered eight counties in the first year, with an additional 20 counties scheduled for 2009–10.