FoodFit –
The key ingredients for a successful health literacy program for low-income participants

Disclosure

Presenter
Alissa Vieth RD, MPH, BASc

Program Funders
Grants/Research Support: Public Health Agency of Canada, Brian and Joannah Lawson, Lawson Foundation, Royal Bank of Canada, Manulife, Medavie Health Foundation

In-kind support
Pulse Canada, Steps Count Canada, Dr. Mike Evans and The Evans Health Lab
WHO WE ARE

Our mission

We build health, belonging, and social justice in low-income communities across Canada through the power of food.
Program areas

Healthy Food Access  Healthy Food Skills  Education & Engagement

POWERING UP COMMUNITIES THROUGH FOODFIT
The FoodFit program was developed to bring low-income and socially isolated community members together to eat healthily, move more, and make new friends.

The Key Ingredients of FoodFit
Recruit Appropriate Participants

FoodFit participant:

- motivated and ready to make changes
- committed to all aspects of the program

Commitment based
NOT drop-in program

Focusing On Low Income Realities

With incomes too low to afford healthy food, not enough time or energy to exercise and other barriers like isolation, lack of support - it can be difficult to make changes

Empower participants to make small shifts towards better health no matter their life circumstances
Provide Time For Change

Why 12 weeks?
- Content exposure
- Reinforced messages
- Increase confidence
- See changes in health

We are in the lasting change business. To see change we must leave space and time for that to happen.

Meet Participants Where They’re At

Everyone has their own starting point, finish line and path to get there

Focus on making healthier choices they can live with
Social Connection & Support

Being socially connected has a positive influence on physical and mental health and well-being.

Participant Focused Evaluation Tools

Program goals and outcomes +
Participant exploration, measurement & feedback tool

Introduce ways for participants to measure their health and or gauge their fitness level - defining ‘health’ in their own terms.
Wrap Around Support

CFCC develops curriculum, training and provides funding

CFCC conducts evaluation analysis

Create facilitator community of support for peer learning - make program engaging and fun!

The Key Ingredients of FoodFit

- Recruit Appropriate Participants
- Focus on Low Income Realities
- Provide Time For Change
- Meet Participants Where They’re At
- Social Connection and Support
- Participant Focused Evaluation Tools
- Wrap Around Support
THANK YOU!

COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES
CANADA

80 Ward Street, Suite 100, Toronto M6H 4A6
Facebook/LinkedIn: Community Food Centres Canada
Twitter/Instagram/YouTube: @aplaceforfood
www.cfccanada.ca
Charitable #83391 4484 RT001

PROGRAM OUTCOMES
Eating healthier

67% of FoodFit participants increased their daily fruit and vegetable consumption during the program.

At the beginning of the program, only 45% of participants were eating 5 or more daily servings of fruit and vegetables – this increased to 66% by the end of the program.

“FoodFit has given me the knowledge to make healthier decisions.”
FoodFit participant
Hillhurst-Sunnyside Community Association

“Cooking with people and eating with people were my favourite part of the program. There is lots of laughter shared over sharing food which made the whole experience very nourishing. I really loved this program.”
FoodFit participant
Sherbourne Health Centre

Cooking more and making healthier choices

- 74% increased the amount of whole grains in their diet
- 50% decreased the number of days they consumed sugar sweetened beverages
- 42% were making home-made meals from scratch more days in the week by the end of the program
- 94% tried a new food (or familiar food in a different way) in the program
Moving more

FoodFit encourages participants to increase their daily physical activity—we don’t set targets because everyone is beginning at a different starting line. We just ask them to try better!

Participants share a group 30 minute walk or other physical activity each week. Participants track their daily steps at various points during the program with program-supplied medical grade pedometers.

Participants are introduced to a number of at-home strength and flexibility exercises of varying difficulty that help make routine activities like opening doors, sitting down and getting back up, and picking things up off the floor easier.

Making new friends

“One of my symptoms of clinical depression is isolation. Being part of this program has prevented me from that.”
FoodFit participant, Dartmouth North CFC

“The FoodFit program has given me a healthier lifestyle; my mood is relaxed, physically I feel fine. It helps my body, mind, and spirit. I feel good about myself and happier.”
FoodFit participant, Mission Services

84% made a social connection with someone they felt they could count on for support.

74% reported an improvement in their physical health, 79% in their mental health.