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Slow Foods for Health

Increasing Knowledge of Glycemic Index in
Adolescents for Healthier Food Choices

Colchester Family Practice

Meredith Sooy

October 2015

Dr. Anya Koutras & Dr. Alicia Jacobs

Problem Identification

- ▶ Many adolescents have inadequate knowledge of nutrition basics to make healthy choices.
- ▶ Many food are advertised as “healthy” or “natural” but are processed and packed with sugars and calories.
- ▶ While many resources currently exist, there is limited information about glycemic index and “slow foods” and little geared towards adolescents.
- ▶ Colchester school district offers a variety of healthy food options to students and with more knowledge they can make healthier choices.

Public Health Impact

- ▶ Obesity has reached epidemic proportions through the United States affect all age groups, genders, and races.
- ▶ This is especially troubling in the pediatric population where 12.5 million children were found to be overweight in 2010.¹
- ▶ Overweight and obesity can lead to a variety of negative health consequences such as hypertension, dyslipidemia and type 2 diabetes², which are presenting at increasingly young ages.⁵
- ▶ In the adolescent population 19.6% and 17.1% of boys and girls are obese, respectively.¹
- ▶ This population is especially prone to overweight and obesity due to the decrease in physical activity³, deterioration of their diets to include less fruits and vegetable, and more calorie dense processed foods⁴ during this developmental stage.

Community Perspective

- ▶ Alicia Jacobs, MD- Provider at Colchester Family Practice
 - ▶ “Many teens do not realize how much sugar is in processed foods. They think they are eating something healthy but it is really just a pack of processed sugar.”
 - ▶ “We could really use a hand out geared towards adolescents explaining the basics of the glycemic index.”
- ▶ Chassidy Deslauriers, RD- Community Health Team
 - ▶ “It would be really applicable for our patients if you could give them a “choose this, not that” of options based of the types that are found in the cafeteria at the local schools.”
- ▶ Steve Davis- Director of Nutrition & Food Services of Colchester Schools
 - ▶ “Students are offered many healthy choices in our cafeteria and have to take a fruit or a vegetable, however we see many of these get thrown out.”
 - ▶ “Students have healthy options available but they are not used to seeing them at home and they are reluctant to try new things.”

Methods


- ▶ Interview Family Physicians and Community Health Team of Colchester Family Medicine to determine needs of patient population
- ▶ Interview Director at Colchester School District Food Services to determine food options available to adolescents in the community.
- ▶ Conduct a literature review to determine latest data on the effect of glycemic index on healthy food choices
- ▶ Further investigate the “slow food movement” and determine how this is applicable to healthy choices in adolescents.
- ▶ Create a handout to explain basic information about glycemic index, major macronutrient, and choosing a healthier lunch in the cafeteria based on this new knowledge geared towards adolescents.
- ▶ Handout will be used by providers at Colchester Family Medicine to educate adolescents and promote healthier nutrition choices

Results

FAMILY MEDICINE

Slow Foods for Health

*How to Choose a Healthy Lunch
and Feel Your Best!*



What makes up the foods we eat?

Fats are an essential part of the diet for energy and vitamin absorption, but not too many. There are lots of different types of fats: Saturated fats, unsaturated fats, and trans fats.

Carbohydrates are the most important source of energy for your body. Your body breaks carbohydrates down into sugars to be used as energy or stored. There are two types of carbohydrates: simple and complex. Simple carbohydrates include sugars found naturally in foods such as fruits, vegetables, milk, and sugars added during food processing and refining. Complex carbohydrates include whole grain breads and cereals, starchy vegetables and legumes.

Proteins are the building blocks of our bodies. They make up cells that build muscles and bones. It is important to get enough protein because your body can not store it the way it does carbohydrates and fats. Animal sources of protein tend to deliver all the amino acids we need while sources, such as fruits, vegetables, grains, and nuts lack one or more essential amino acids. The average person needs 50 to 65 gram .

What is the glycemic index?

The glycemic index is a measure of how quickly a food containing carbohydrates increasing your blood sugar. Foods with a low glycemic index less likely to cause large increases in blood sugar levels .

Why is the glycemic index important?

By knowing the glycemic index of foods, you can make healthier food choices. By choosing foods with a low glycemic index, you will keep your energy up longer and feel better throughout your day. Foods with a low glycemic index include:

- 100% whole wheat bread
- Rolled or steel cut oatmeal
- Sweet potatoes, corn, peas and lentils
- Most fruits

Avoid foods with a high glycemic index like:

- Corn flakes or instant oatmeal
- White bread or bagels
- Potatoes
- Pretzels

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MEDICAL CENTER

Instead of this...



Juices and Dried Fruits



Refined Grains



Limit Added Sugars



Avoid Sugar-Sweetened Drinks

Choose This!



Whole Fruits



Whole Grains



Eat Unprocessed Foods



Drink Water

For more information go to:

- www.Choosemyplate.gov
- www.Nutrition.gov
- www.healthychildren.org


UVMHealth.org/MedCenter

Effectiveness and Limitations

- ▶ Handouts are a convenient and cost-effective way to educate patients.
- ▶ Specific choices that patients can make are displayed on the handout for easy options for patients.
- ▶ Patients reading the handouts is a limitation of this project
- ▶ Behavior change is a challenge for all patients, even given knowledge about nutrition, it is up to patient intrinsic motivation to make changes

Future Directions

- ▶ Handouts will now be available for use by all providers at Colchester Family Practice.
- ▶ While information was geared at adolescents much of the information is applicable to a more diverse population.
- ▶ An assessment of adolescents' current level of knowledge of nutrition could help guide creation of future handouts
- ▶ Because exposure to “slow foods” was a barrier identified in the community, a cooking class for adolescents could help to increase their experience and interested in nutrition.

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