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Diabetic Eating at the Dollar Store

by Lee Hiromoto, MS-III, UVM Larner
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precepted by: Kristopher Jensen, MD
at Berlin Family Medicine

Problem Identification and Need

- People living with type 2 diabetes mellitus should maintain a healthy diet as part of optimal glycemic control.
- Such diets include fruit, vegetables, and proteins.
- However, socioeconomic constraints such as income and transportation can make it difficult for patients to eat a diabetes appropriate diet.
- During my family medicine rotation in Berlin, Vermont, I heard diabetic patients express a desire for concrete suggestions vs. general principles.

Public Health Costs

- Per American Diabetes Association, over 30 million Americans have diabetes, with a 2.3 times greater health cost than those without, totalling \$327,000,000,000 per year.
- 8% of Vermonters have diabetes (~40,000 people).
- 25% of Vermonters over 20 are obese, which can be associated with diabetes.
- Feeding America estimates that 61% of Washington County residents are eligible for federal nutrition assistance.

Community Perspective

Kate Bean, RD, CDE, Berlin Family Medicine Diebetic Educator and Nutrionist:

- Q: What are some problems facing diabetics when eating?
- A: “Lack of knowledge. Lack of resources for a healthier diet.”

Laura Philipps, MSW, JD, Berlin Family Medicine Social Worker:

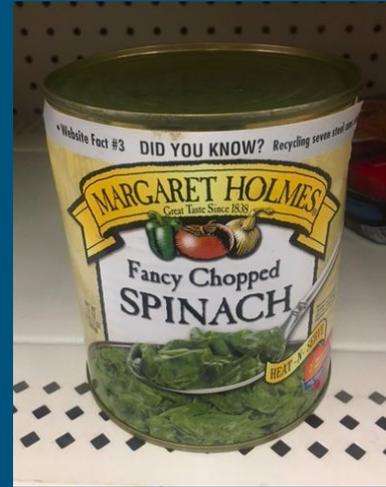
- Q: What are socioeconomic obstacles facing diabetics regarding their diet?
- A: “Lack of access. Many patients do their grocery shopping at the dollar store.”

Intervention and Methodology

- Goal: provide information about following a diabetic diet using food from dollar stores.
- Research diabetic diets by speaking with nutritionist, reading UpToDate.
- Field research: visit a dollar store and evaluate the food options that allow for inclusion of vegetables, fruits, protein, and fiber.
- Create handout with recipe ideas and distribute to preceptor, Dr. Jensen.

Results/Response

- I found a number potential ways to use dollar store items to eat a diabetic diet.
- Dollar stores have both canned and frozen fruits, vegetables, and protein sources that can be part of a well-balanced diet.
- With some creativity and guidance, dollar store items can be utilized to make diabetic-appropriate meals.



Evaluation of Effectiveness/Limitations

- This is a first step in giving more information to those following a diabetic diet--not a comprehensive guide.
- Not all dollar stores may have the products I highlighted, which may create uncertainty for those less comfortable with improvising.
- While my information provided specific recommendations, the ultimate burden is on a patient to read labels, allocate portions, and adhere to healthy diet.
- For individuals and families of limited means (i.e. no kitchen access, limited mobility), it may be hard to prepare a meal with multiple ingredients.

Recommendations for Future Projects

- Produce a menu book, with substitutions that account for different store inventories.
- In-person dollar store tour showing what to look for.
- Dollar store cooking class, using ingredients from dollar store, showing how to prepare and apportion.

References

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- UpToDate: “Nutritional considerations in type 2 diabetes mellitus.”

- American Association of Diabetes Educators, “Healthy Shopping at the Dollar Store”

<https://www.diabeteseducator.org/docs/default-source/new-and-publications/AADE-In-Practice/healthy-shopping-at-the-dollar-store.pdf?sfvrsn=0>.