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Diabetic Eating at the Dollar Store

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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.
Kate Bean, RD, CDE, Berlin Family Medicine Diabetic Educator and Nutritionist:

• 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

- Feeding America: [https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/research/map-the-meal-gap/2016/overall/VT_AllCounties_CDs_MMG_2016.pdf](https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/research/map-the-meal-gap/2016/overall/VT_AllCounties_CDs_MMG_2016.pdf)
- UpToDate: “Nutritional considerations in type 2 diabetes mellitus.”