

Beneficial Bites

Introduction from Leslie Fijalkiewicz, Dietitian/Nutrition Program Supervisor Barron County:

My intent has never been to get people to “eat flaxseed everyday” or to have people cook with “fresh herbs all the time”. I just want people to realize that every little thing we do nutritionally to improve our health, is better than doing nothing. Sort of like walking...every step counts.

Nutrition advice is everywhere and most of the time it comes with an implied “all or nothing.”

This program really is about bite-sized pieces of nutrition information that can be applied to every day living. Best of all, it's research based and it helps remind the public that we are the place to go for advice about nutrition for older adults.

The "superfoods" we chose to spotlight are not random...they might be in the news or they are foods that our seniors are familiar with. We just try to talk about and show how the foods can be used in a practical sense.

Staff buy-in is vital to the program. I recommend that you talk to all of your staff before starting so they understand that we aren't trying to shove yet another thing down their throats! I have found that staff love to do these presentations because it gives them a chance to “be the expert.” Plus, they are easy to do. The scripted presentations are to educate the presenter as much as it is to educate the audience. The outline also lets them present the information they are comfortable with presenting. They don't have to do it all.

My final thoughts...the ENP requires that we provide nutrition education. This is just as valuable as the meal we provide. Let's face it, money is not pouring into our programs. Through the Beneficial Bites program we have been able to introduce people to our program in a new way. It isn't just the senior diners who come to learn. If we can reach the 60-75 year olds and get them to incorporate some of these bite-sized tips, maybe we can help them delay the need for our program or other more costly services. The reality is this...there will ALWAYS be people who need meals, and if we don't do something to help others delay the need, we will have widespread waiting lists...at least that's my thought on the subject!

So that's Beneficial Bites in a nutshell and I might add that none of it would be possible without student interns and dietetics undergrads. Please make sure that you leave their names on the items they have created. Please call me if you have any questions, general or specific. It was such an exciting 2010 and I'm just as jacked up about our 2011 topics!

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