

INCORPORATING A SKILLS-BASED NUTRITION CURRICULUM IN A HIGH SCHOOL HEALTH CLASS

Authors: K. Gero¹, A. Nickerson¹, C. Tompkins², P. Callas³,

1. Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT

2. Department of Rehabilitation and Movement Science, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT

3. Department of Mathematics and Statistics, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT

Learning Outcome: To identify nutrition knowledge, attitude, and skills before and after a nutrition education program in a high school health class.

Text: Adolescents in the U.S. have poor lifestyle habits which contribute to their risk for obesity and nutrition-related health conditions. Studies have shown that after participating in nutrition education programs, adolescents exhibit increased nutrition knowledge, yet often lack changes in nutrition-related behaviors. The purpose of this study was to determine the knowledge, skills and attitudes of high school students before and after a series of nutrition education classes that were based on specific constructs of the Social Cognitive Theory and Theory of Planned Behavior. Eleven high school students participated in a series of five nutrition lessons over the course of three weeks. Topics included food groups, MyPlate, portion size control, reading food labels, meal planning and eating breakfast. Each lesson was 90 minutes in length and taught by a graduate nutrition student. Identical pre- and post-surveys were administered to assess the students nutrition-related knowledge, skills and attitudes. Descriptive statistics and paired-sample t tests were calculated for survey analysis. There was an increase in student confidence in reading food labels ($p=0.005$) and meal planning ($p=.03$). Results suggest that nutrition education programs which include a skills-based component may positively influence the nutrition-related behaviors of high school students. Due to the short duration and small sample size in this study, results were limited. Future studies should consider incorporating a longer nutrition education program.

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