

Seniors Eating Well Snippets

Module 1 – Bone health

Setup: Put the “cue block”, plastic pig and leaflets for the module on your registration table.

Explanation for “pass the pig”: Use to gain answers to the calcium-rich foods question below; have participants stand in a circle and pass to each other. Each time someone catches the pig, they have to come up with an answer.

General introduction: *Over the next 4 weeks, I have “5-minute modules” about nutrition for Seniors.*

So, is everyone up for 5 minutes? There are a few quiz questions at the end of each session, so listen carefully!

Hold up the cue board. *You may have guessed this first module is about bone health.*

Maintaining strong bones is vital as we get older to prevent osteoporosis. Put up your hand if you know someone with osteoporosis, or someone who has fractured a hip or other bone recently. Osteoporosis affects a lot of older people in New Zealand.

Point to the bones on the cue block. *Osteoporosis happens when our bones lose minerals like calcium, become brittle and break easily.*

There are four things you can do to keep your bones strong and prevent fractures.

- 1. Load you bones (resistance activity) – that’s what you are doing in this class!*
- 2. Stay a healthy weight. Particularly being underweight isn’t good for your bones. Losing weight very quickly or repeatedly gaining and then losing weight aren’t good either.*
- 3. Have a variety of foods each day i.e. some protein-rich foods (we will cover this in Module 3), and lots of different coloured vegetables and fruit. **Let’s pass the pig around to come up with ideas to eat more vegetables and fruit.***
- 4. Eat plenty of calcium-rich foods. **Let’s pass the pig to come up with foods high in calcium.***

Looking for: milk and milk products (milk, yoghurt, cheese) and milk alternatives like soy milk etc with added calcium

Other calcium sources include fish with bones like sardines and canned salmon, some nuts/seeds like almonds, Brazil nuts and sesame seeds, some green vegetables like broccoli, kale or bok choy. However, (per serving) milk products are the most concentrated source of calcium. They are also affordable, convenient and good sources of protein and Vitamin B12 (which are important nutrients for older adults).

Get out in the sunlight every day because Vitamin D (from the sun) is like a key that lets calcium into our bones. Aim for 20-30mins in the middle of the day in winter and before 10am and after 4pm in summer.

NB People at risk of vitamin D deficiency are advised to see their GP team about supplementation.

Risk factors include living south of Nelson in winter, minimal time spent outside, covering skin, having dark skin, strict vegan diet.

Quiz Questions:

1. Name 3 calcium-rich foods?

ANSWER: Milk, yoghurt, cheese, fortified plant milks, foods based on milk e.g. custard, milk puddings, white sauce and to some extent green leafy vegetables, canned fish, nuts ... just remember you need to eat a lot more of these foods. Reminder – variety each day is very important!

2. Which contains the most calcium per cup: Blue-top milk, green-top milk, calcium-enriched soy milk, broccoli?

ANSWER: Green-top milk. By removing the fat from blue-top milk, the concentration of calcium (and protein) is increased – You'll get about 20% more calcium and protein per glass. The amount of calcium in soy milk varies. By choosing the calci-plus version you'll get about the same or slightly more than you would from blue top milk. You will need about 2 cups of broccoli to get the same amount of calcium as 1 cup blue-top milk (or 4 cups to equal 1 cup of yellow-top milk).

TIP: add 2 tablespoons of skim milk powder to green-top milk to get yellow-top milk.

3. This is a yes/no question. Is it possible to absorb Vitamin D through glass? Hands up yes, hands up no.

ANSWER: No – that is why it is important to get out in direct sunlight for about 20 minutes a day. In the summer, always be sun smart. Wear sunscreen, protective clothing and stay in the shade during the hottest part of the day. NB: you can't absorb Vitamin D through sunblock either.

Who got all 3 questions correct?

Give a bit of praise! And ask if anyone learned anything new.

Application:

Ask the group: *In pairs, take a minute to share one thing you will do this week to keep your bones healthy.*

Handout: *Eating well for strong healthy bones. Healthinfo Canterbury/ Waitaha.*