

The Family Life Cycle - The Elderly

Summary

Individual food choices and nutritional needs within the framework of the Family Life Cycle model.

Materials

- Any good comprehensive food and nutrition textbook.
- *Uncommon Therapy*
by Jay Haley (1973)
- *The Changing Family Life Cycle: a Framework for Therapy*
second edition, edited by Betty Carter and Monica McGoldrick (1989).
- *Nutrition and the Elderly*
by Georgia C. Lauritzen, Ph.D., R.D. Nutrition Specialist, Cooperative Extension Service, Utah State University.
- *Nutrition and Older Americans*
by Georgia C. Lauritzen, Ph.D., R.D. Nutrition Specialist, Cooperative Extension Service, Utah State University.
- *Starting Healthy Eating Habits*
by Oregon State University Extension Service
Illinois Teacher of Home Economics. " *Understanding the Aging Process Through Simulation*",
Vicki L. Schmall and Maryanne Staton. Vol xxv, No.4. March/April 1982.

Background for Teachers

Good family meal planning must respond to the different nutritional needs of individual members who are at different stages of the Family Life Cycle.

ELDERLY FAMILY MEMBERS

At the other extreme on a nutrition needs continuum is the population of elderly. In the United States this age group is rapidly increasing, not just because people are living longer, but because more people are living to the age of 75. These people are often living independently and sometimes alone. Most are able to make their own decisions and care for themselves, but because of the body's natural aging process, and because of their stage in the family life cycle, elderly needs are unique. The elderly may have small appetites and some may even be too weak to get enough to eat at a meal. Some are also on limited incomes. Consideration could be given to several small meals and/or nutritious, easily chewed and digested snacks between meals.

A person living alone and buying groceries for one may need to:

Buy 3 pieces of fruit--one ripe, one medium ripe and one quite green, so they ripen over a period of time.

Buy small cans of vegetables and small packages of meat.

Use leftovers creatively.

Buy milk in smaller cartons and buy eggs 1/2 dozen at a time.

Learn to use dry milk, soup stock, and experiment with stir fry foods.

Cook for several meals at a time. Divide and freeze the foods.

Freeze half of a loaf of fresh bread (in freezer, not refrigerator) until needed. A refrigerator makes the bread go stale, while a freezer keeps it fresh.

If there is freezer space, buy and divide large bags of meat and vegetables.

Old age is a time of losses and loneliness, and loneliness is no respecter of income. Resulting apathy and depression are major causes of malnutrition in the elderly. Learning how to prepare meals for one or two people after a family is raised, is a difficult adjustment for many people. Financially they

may find that buying with someone else and splitting the purchase may prove to be economical for both parties.

If elderly family members are living with younger members in the same household, meal planning challenges can be solved partially by using a wide variety of foods so that each individual's needs has a chance of being met.

Most of the United States citizens who are elderly are well-nourished, but those who are in trouble can be in very serious trouble. Prevention of health problems in old age requires good nutrition throughout the life cycle.

NOTE TO TEACHER: The teenagers in your class might not like food appropriate to the elderly. Be prepared to discuss this and elaborate on needs and taste changes over the life cycle. Try to develop understanding and empathy in the students. (This experience could take more than one class period.)

Instructional Procedures

LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

OPTION #1

Obtain a copy of "The Mailbox", a Brigham Young University (BYU) production available from the audio-visual department. Show this presentation before presenting information on the elderly. Discuss problems of health/nutrition facing the elderly.

OPTION #2

Have the students complete [AGING SIMULATION](#) as the teacher discusses the changes that often occur with each of the five senses as a person ages.

OPTION #3

Complete a laboratory experience preparing and evaluating food appropriate for the elderly. Discuss food lab experiences. List all the reasons why a particular food product is a good food choice for the elderly.

See [NUTRITION FOR THE ELDERLY ASSIGNMENT](#) and [RECIPES FOR THE ELDERLY](#).

OPTION #4

Have the students plan daily menus for senior citizens with different needs (a healthy 65-year-old couple who travel a lot; a diabetic man of 70; people with dentures; a 62-year-old man with heart problems; a 65-year-old woman with ulcers). Have the students share their work in class and summarize the ways in which various needs were met.

OPTION #5

Plan a field trip and visit a Meals on Wheels facility. See the process of preparing and delivering the meals. Use the resource, [NOTES ON MEAL ON WHEELS](#), to have the students record information about this service to the elderly living in their area. OR have a guest speaker from a local agency that provides services to the elderly speak on working with and helping the elderly.

OPTION #6

Have the students write in their reflection notebooks a paragraph describing or telling about (1) their favorite toddler or preschooler or (2) their favorite senior citizen. (Note: a fun variation is to post pictures of famous senior citizens, movie stars--old and young, or appealing young children around the room and have the students choose a picture and respond by writing about the picture in their notebooks.)

Authors

[PEARL HART](#)

[Utah LessonPlans](#)