This guide explains what the *Eat Smart, Live Strong* activities are designed to accomplish and how they work.
Welcome to the *Eat Smart, Live Strong* Activity Kit. By using these four fun, interactive sessions, you can help low-income older adults adopt *two key behaviors* that will improve their health and quality of life:

1. **Eat at least 3½ cups of fruits and vegetables every day**¹
   (1½ cups of fruits and 2 cups of vegetables)

2. **Participate in at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week**

This introductory guide explains what the kit activities are designed to accomplish – and why they work.

*Eat Smart, Live Strong* Will Make a Difference!

¹This recommendation is based upon the estimated calorie need (1,600 calories) of sedentary women ages 60–74 years, depending on exercise and activity levels. Calorie intake in older adults can range from 1,600 calories to 2,600 calories per day (see page 7).
Older Adults Will Benefit from *Eat Smart, Live Strong*

The four sessions in this kit are designed for able-bodied, independent, older adults 60 to 74 years of age. They promote specific eating and physical activity behaviors shown to improve health and well-being. The sessions are designed to:

- Encourage older adults to learn new skills
- Provide leaders with facilitated discussions and activities that promote enjoyable, social, and interactive learning
- Engage older adults in activities that can encourage behavior change
- Assist program providers in delivering nutrition education to older adults
Good intentions and knowledge about health are not enough to make people healthy. Unless older adults actively do something, their health status does not improve and may even decline more rapidly. Each session in *Eat Smart, Live Strong* focuses on changing behavior by guiding participants in learning and practicing new skills.

Changing habits is hard. You are asking participants to take on behaviors that they will need to repeat every day. Trying to change too many behaviors at once can be overwhelming. *Eat Smart, Live Strong* helps you focus your efforts on just two behaviors. If participants adopt and maintain just these two simple behaviors, you can help them make a difference in their lives.

“Most vegetables and fruits are major contributors of a number of nutrients that are underconsumed in the United States, including folate, magnesium, potassium, dietary fiber, and vitamins A, C, and K.”

Experts from the fields of medicine, nutrition, and public health agree that eating more fruits and vegetables and participating in physical activity will benefit almost everyone. If older adults eat at least 3 1/2 cups of fruits and vegetables daily as part of an overall healthy diet, they may:

- Get some of the vitamins, minerals, and fiber the body needs to maintain good health
- Maintain energy levels
- Maintain regularity
- Prevent or delay the effects of chronic disease such as obesity, hypertension, and heart disease
- Add color, taste, and variety to the diet

When older adults participate in at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days, they may:

- Prevent or delay the effects of chronic disease
- Feel better
- Decrease stress, anxiety, and depression
- Help control weight
- Build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints
- Improve strength
- Increase balance and reduce the risk of falling
- Improve sleep

Sharing the benefits gained by practicing these two behaviors will encourage older adults to try them.
For older adults to adopt new behaviors, they must feel encouraged and see how they will benefit from the behaviors. People are more likely to adopt a behavior when they:

- Have a chance to try it and find that they like it
- Feel that it will be easy to do and are confident that they can do it
- Believe that others support them in the new behavior; people such as family members, peers, and health professionals
- Set a goal to start a new habit, track their success, and gain a sense of accomplishment
- Participate in active learning, offering their own experiences and solutions
- See how potential obstacles can be overcome with new strategies and solutions

All four sessions in this kit stress these important ways of encouraging participants to achieve the two behaviors.

“The amount of physical activity necessary to successfully maintain a healthy body weight depends on calorie intake and varies considerably among adults, including older adults.”

In addition, the session activities provide:

- Games and activities that engage participants in learning
- Opportunities to socialize, which is important both to draw older adults to the sessions and to demonstrate that others like them value the two behaviors
- Exercises to demonstrate physical activity
- Suggestions for reinforcement tools or items to keep participants engaged

The session titles are:

Session 1 Reach Your Goals, Step by Step
Session 2 Challenges and Solutions
Session 3 Colorful and Classic Favorites
Session 4 Eat Smart, Spend Less

Participants will share experiences, and each of the four sessions will draw on their personal and practical knowledge and understanding.

“Today, we know a lot more about older adults and their need to exercise. Regardless of their health and physical abilities, older adults can gain a lot by staying physically active. Even if you have difficulty standing or walking, you can still exercise and benefit from it. In fact, in most cases, you have more to lose by not doing anything.”

Eat Smart, Live Strong is based on recommendations from the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, a rich source of dietary health information for nutrition educators and health providers. These guidelines are based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence, and provide information and advice for choosing a nutritious diet, maintaining a healthy weight, achieving adequate exercise, and avoiding foodborne illness. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans reinforce the importance of a nutritious diet and regular physical activity in achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight for older adults.

Increasing the level of daily physical activity may also provide indirect nutritional benefits for older adults. A low-activity lifestyle limits the number of calories that can be consumed without gaining weight. The higher a person’s physical activity level, the higher his energy requirement, and the easier it is to plan a daily food intake pattern that meets recommended nutrient requirements.

The Web site www.ChooseMyPlate.gov is an interactive site to help individuals 2 years and older use the USDA food guidance system. The site provides individualized food plans, as well as tips for following the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

The table on page 7 highlights the recommended caloric intake and fruit and vegetable consumption for older adults 60 to 74 years of age. Encourage participants to eat the recommended daily amounts based on age, gender, and physical activity level to meet their nutritional needs.
### Fruit and Vegetable Intake for 1600 – 2600 Calories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low daily activity level (less than 30 minutes)</th>
<th>Medium daily activity level (30 to 60 minutes)</th>
<th>High daily activity level (60 minutes or more)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women ages 60–74</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended caloric intake</td>
<td>1600 cal.</td>
<td>1800 cal.</td>
<td>2000 – 2200 cal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended fruit consumption</td>
<td>1½ cups</td>
<td>1½ cups</td>
<td>2 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended vegetable consumption</td>
<td>2 cups</td>
<td>2½ cups</td>
<td>2½ – 3 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men ages 60–74</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended fruit consumption</td>
<td>2 cups</td>
<td>2 cups</td>
<td>2 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended vegetable consumption</td>
<td>2½ – 3 cups</td>
<td>3 cups</td>
<td>3 – 3½ cups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The values in this table reflect information in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans consumer booklet.*
Because of the interactive nature of ChooseMyPlate.gov, this web site provides an ideal opportunity to work with older adults participating in Eat Smart, Live Strong sessions. By using and sharing information, you can provide older adults with specific food plans, as well as tips for eating a nutritious diet and getting regular physical activity.

The following links will help you become familiar with ChooseMyPlate.gov materials and tools. The web site offers a wealth of information for nutrition educators and participants to help them teach and practice positive nutrition behaviors. Visit ChooseMyPlate.gov before using the sessions to become familiar with this comprehensive food guidance system.

MyPlate, My Wins
www.choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/myplate-mywins

MyPlate Kitchen
www.choosemyplate.gov/myplatekitchen
At the end of an *Eat Smart, Live Strong* session, ask participants if they would like to develop a personal eating plan at ChooseMyPlate.gov. You can make group or individual appointments with interested older adults. You will need to use a digital device, such as a laptop or computer, with an Internet connection.

To create a personal food plan for an older adult:

- Go to ChooseMyPlate.gov and look for the “Get Your MyPlate Plan” option in the middle of the screen.
- Ask the participants if they would like to create a profile by entering their age, sex, and physical activity level or use the general plan. If needed, review the customized or sample plan with your participants to clarify any information.
- If participants are only interested in identifying their calorie needs, educators can also provide a personal Daily Plan.

- Enter the individual’s age, sex, weight, height, and physical activity level to obtain a custom calorie plan to maintain or achieve a healthy weight. Create a printout version of the results by clicking on the print options at the right of the screen.
- Follow up with the participant after about a week to check progress.
Preparing for the Eat Smart, Live Strong Sessions

This kit provides you with most of what you need to prepare for and conduct each of the four sessions, including:

- Session instructions
- Facilitation tips
- Space for your notes and adaptations
- Reusable materials for games and activities
- Participant handouts to copy for use during the session and to send home with participants
- Feedback sheets for the participants

The information in each session is organized in a similar way:

- Objectives
- Overview
- How the Session Encourages Behavior
- Materials
- Preparation
- Optional Physical Activity Warm-Up
- The Session
  1. Welcome and Introduction
  2. Skills-Building Activity
  3. Wrap Up
- Optional Physical Activity Cool-Down
Preparation and Materials Costs

Every effort has been made to keep the activities low in cost. Some facilitators are able to use donated food and other products for food demonstrations and tasting.

Cost of Fruits and Vegetables

Participants may point out that fresh fruits and vegetables cost more than other foods. You will need to be ready to discuss low-cost options, especially during Sessions 2 and 4. Suggest other forms of fruits and vegetables such as dried, frozen, and canned options. Show samples of canned vegetables labeled as low sodium and canned fruits packed in 100% juice or water. Throughout these sessions, there are tips that you can share to help participants make choices to fit their budgets.

Partnerships and Community Resources

As you review the sessions, think of local community resources that can help promote the behaviors. You may find other partners in your community who can provide discounts to your participants, recruit low-income older adults to come to your sessions, or offer space for you to hold your sessions. Become familiar with nutrition assistance programs and other community resources such as:

**FNS Nutrition Assistance Programs**
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Older Americans Act Nutrition Program
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program
- Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program
- Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations

**Other Community Resources**
- Home-delivered meal program
- Local congregate dining sites
- Local food banks and pantries
- Senior centers
- Community-based organizations
- Grocery stores
- Local American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
- Local Departments on Aging

Refer participants to their local health care providers (clinics, dietitians, and nurses) to address health concerns or chronic diseases that may affect their dietary or physical activity choices.

By making connections in your community beforehand, you will be able to direct your participants to specific resources that can address their individual needs.
Preventing for the *Eat Smart, Live Strong* Sessions continued

Tailoring the Sessions for Your Groups

You may choose to do some or all of the activities in each session. You may also wish to adapt the activities to meet the specific needs of your site or your group participants. Tips for adjusting the sessions and ideas for expanding or reinforcing the activities are addressed throughout the session guides.

To tailor the sessions, consider the following:

**Available Space**

The space where you meet may require you to make some changes to the session. For example, if you do not have blank wall space for posting cards, consider laying the cards out on a table. If you cannot move the chairs into a circle or place them around a table, you will want to find another way to allow participants to interact with one another.

**Time**

The approximate time you will need to conduct each session is about 45 minutes. If you have more time, use the exercises prepared for that session. Each booklet includes a different set of optional, non-strenuous exercises to use as warm-up and cool-down. These exercises can add an additional 20 minutes to the session.
Multiple Sessions

The kit is designed as a series of four inter-related sessions, but each session may be used alone. If you are unable to offer the sessions in a series or if participants do not attend regularly, even a single session may help a participant to try a new behavior.

Group Size

The discussions and activities in these sessions work best with groups of up to 10 people. If the group is large (more than 10), you may need to divide participants into separate sessions or ask another facilitator to help you.

Participant Characteristics

The most important way for you to tailor the sessions is to take into account your participants’ characteristics, culture, and life experiences. While you can adapt the kit’s materials ahead of time, be sure to solicit participants’ views and solutions within the activities to build on your participants’ life experiences. Below are some of the ways you may need to adapt the kit’s materials:

- **Culture.** People’s food preferences are formed by experiences and culture. Let participants share ideas and information about their preferences. For example, in Session 3, participants suggest ways to add fruits or vegetables to their favorite dishes. These “classics” will vary widely, depending on culture and geography. This kit contains visual cards to show a range of traditional dishes but be ready to add other dishes according to participants’ preferences.

Values and beliefs about physical activity also vary from culture to culture. Help participants identify appropriate physical activity that doesn’t conflict with cultural values. In cases like this, participants may need help in finding appropriate ways to be physically active.
Preparation for the *Eat Smart, Live Strong* Sessions continued

- **Lifestyle and living situation.** The materials are designed for able-bodied, independent older adults between the ages of 60 and 74. However, some of the adults who participate in your sessions may receive assistance from family members or others in food shopping, meal planning, and food preparation. Help participants look for ways to manage their food choices. For instance, if participants’ meals are usually prepared by a family member or caregiver, encourage participants to share the session handouts with those who help them.

Look for other opportunities to influence those who are managing participants’ meals. Caregivers also might be encouraged to motivate and provide opportunities for physical activity. Each handout includes information that may motivate caregivers and family members to encourage the two behaviors.

Older adults also may be limited in physical activity if they do not have an appropriate or safe space to exercise. Encourage participants to try doing the exercises at home, in a common space in their apartment buildings, at a local mall, or outside if the weather permits.

Encourage participants to find ways to become more physically active in their daily routines through activities such as:
- Parking their car farther away
- Taking the stairs
- Walking with friends
- Joining free or reduced-cost physical activity groups available at their places of worship or community centers

- **Language and literacy.** You may work with people who have trouble reading – because they never learned, because their eyesight is failing, or because English is not their first language. Most of the handouts use pictures and other visuals with minimal text. Take care to ensure that participants capture the meaning of the visuals. You may need to explain the meaning the first time participants see the materials.

Spoken communication may be difficult if all participants are not comfortable speaking English. Identify a volunteer to interpret the information or use an interpreter to assist you in teaching the session.
Ranges in Age and Capabilities

*Eat Smart, Live Strong* was developed and tested for low-income or able-bodied, independent adults 60 to 74 years of age. Even within the target age range, however, people’s needs and capabilities vary greatly. As you plan the sessions consider:

- **Cognitive abilities:** Older adults have a wide range of cognitive abilities. Some participants may have trouble following directions or remembering how to complete an activity. Anticipate their needs with gentle reminders and cues so they are not embarrassed or frustrated. The handouts can be used by friends and family members to help the older adult remember to eat more fruits and vegetables and to exercise.

- **Vision:** The handouts in each session are designed with large type and bold visuals. If people still have trouble seeing the handouts, you may want to read them or describe them aloud. Some participants may be uneasy moving around the room because they cannot see well. Find an alternative such as having peers guide participants through the room.

- **Hearing:** Others may have trouble hearing and will respond better to visual cues.

- **Mobility limitations:** You may need to change the way you carry out some activities to accommodate those who use walkers or wheelchairs, or are limited in other ways. For example, you may have participants work in pairs when doing an activity requiring movement in the room; or you may encourage those in wheelchairs to participate in the optional exercises by using the seated exercises provided or by adapting the standing exercises to seated ones.

Health Conditions and Concerns

When you are familiar with the participants in a group, you may be aware of their top health concerns. Encourage them to talk with their health care provider (physician, dietitian, or nurse) about their concerns. Emphasize that eating fruits and vegetables and getting regular exercise may actually help improve many of the conditions that make participants uneasy about trying the two behaviors. For participants that do not have regular health care, refer them to appropriate resources in their community.
Marketing and Promoting Eat Smart, Live Strong Sessions

While you may be able to hold sessions with participants you are already working with, you will need to consider how you will promote the *Eat Smart, Live Strong* Sessions to recruit others. Promote the Sessions at FNS program sites and encourage service providers to inform older adults about *Eat Smart, Live Strong*.

Find ways to reach out to low-income older adults. Think about what will appeal to participants and how you can reach them. Customize the *Eat Smart, Live Strong* flyer provided in this kit with local contact information and use it to announce upcoming sessions.

Use the flyer to reach potential participants:
- Mail to nutrition assistance program participants
- Place in shopping bags or boxes at food banks, the Senior Farmers’ Market, or other commodities distribution sites
- Hand out at low-income housing sites, congregate meal sites, and senior centers
- Send home with participants and ask to share with a friend

Display the flyer in places where seniors live, work, and regularly visit:
- Senior centers
- Senior housing facilities
- Places of worship
- Shopping malls
- Grocery stores in low-income neighborhoods
- Work sites
- Libraries
- Community recreation centers

Consider sharing the flyer with those who prepare and distribute community newsletters, local newspapers, or bulletins in places of worship.
You may reach these low-income older adults through partners in the community:

- Ask people who see low-income older adults in other settings or for other reasons to encourage attendance. Partners such as Medicaid providers, social workers, senior activity coordinators, or medical providers can help recruit participants.
- Identify leaders in the community and provide them with flyers to pass around.

Find places that offer opportunities to conduct an *Eat Smart, Live Strong* session. Identify opportunities to conduct sessions at:

- Local SNAP offices
- Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program Sites
- Food commodity pickup locations
- Congregate meal sites
- Food banks

However you promote your sessions, keep track of what “works.” You may do this by asking the participants to complete the *Participant Feedback Sheet* or asking them how they heard about the program.
You Are Invited
To Join Us For...

Eat Smart, Live Strong

Enjoy fun and lively activities with other older adults! Talk about easy ways to make smart food choices and exercise more. Learn how you can Eat Smart and Live Strong.

Date/Time:  
Place:  
Contact:  

United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
The USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.
You Are Invited To Join Us For...

**Eat Smart, Live Strong**

Enjoy fun and lively activities with other older adults! Talk about easy ways to make smart food choices and exercise more. Learn how you can Eat Smart and Live Strong.

**Date/Time:**

**Place:**

**Contact:**
Get Feedback About Your Sessions

You, the participants, and your organization or agency will benefit from using the simple feedback tool provided in each session.

Feedback is useful for many reasons:

- As participants fill in the Participant Feedback Sheet, they will take a few moments to reflect on the value of what they have just experienced. This reflection may reinforce the behaviors promoted in the sessions.
- You will learn how participants react to the session. You can use their suggestions to improve future sessions.
- You will document your work, making it easier to report on what you have accomplished.

The session instructions remind you to allow participants a few minutes to complete the form before they leave. If you are working with a group whose reading and writing skills are not strong, you may want to read the feedback questions aloud and record responses on the Participant Feedback Sheet.

Participant Feedback Sheet

Please take a few moments to complete this form. Return this sheet to the group leader. Your comments will help the leader continue to improve the session.

Today's Date: ________________________________

Thank you for participating in Eat Smart, Live Strong!
Optional Physical Activity

“Warm-Up” and “Cool-Down”

Physical activity is one of *Eat Smart, Live Strong’s* two key behaviors. In 20 minutes, you can lead participants through several simple exercises as you begin and end each session.

Each session includes a different handout with four simple exercises. You may use the set as both a warm-up and a cool-down. When participants have a chance to try the same exercises twice – at the beginning and the end of the session – they gain the skills and self-confidence to do these exercises on their own. The handouts illustrate how to do each exercise properly.

Before leading these exercises, remind participants that they are not required to do anything that makes them uncomfortable. Make it clear that they may stop the exercise at any time. Keep in mind that you do not have to teach all of the exercises.

Encourage older adults to choose a physical activity that they enjoy when starting a daily exercise routine. Let them know it’s okay to do a little bit throughout the day to reach their goal. Remind participants to start slowly, if they don’t currently exercise. If older adults are interested in beginning an exercise program that includes more intense physical activity, encourage them to consult their health care provider.
Beyond the Sessions: More Ways to Promote the Two Behaviors

While these sessions are designed to encourage low-income older adults to eat at least 3 1/2 cups of fruits and vegetables a day and to participate in at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week, the sessions alone may not be enough to help participants maintain those behaviors. You or your organization may be in a position to take some additional steps to put these two behaviors within daily practice of your participants.

The more you can engage partners to reinforce the lessons of *Eat Smart, Live Strong*, the more support participants will have as they strive to eat better and exercise more. Let others know about the program:

- **Family members and caregivers** can provide encouragement and may be able to offer more fruits and vegetables or a safe place to exercise.

- **Physicians, nurses, dietitians, and other health professionals** may promote the behaviors to their patients. Older adults take tremendous stock in what their health care providers have to say. The “SMART Cards” that are part of Session 2 help the participants themselves to engage their health care providers in discussions about the two behaviors.

- **FNS program providers and other community-based organizations** that see low-income older adults on a regular basis may be happy to remind participants about the value of the two behaviors and follow up to see how they are doing.

Enjoy the *Eat Smart, Live Strong* Activity Kit!
Additional Resources

SNAP-Ed Connection
http://snaped.fns.usda.gov/
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service
A resource system for nutrition education providers.

Nutrition.gov
www.nutrition.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Provides information about research, educational resources, grants, partnerships, nutrition guidance, consumer information, reports, and other nutrition topics.

ChooseMyPlate
www.ChooseMyPlate.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture
USDA’s Food Guidance System can be customized by age and activity levels to help consumers and professionals understand and follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans
www.DietaryGuidelines.gov
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture
Provides the latest dietary guidance and includes tools for all users.

Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/index.htm
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Offers information about nutrition and physical activity.

Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Small steps can make a big difference in a person’s health. This resource provides information and tools to help improve nutrition and physical activity for all age groups.

Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/prerep.htm
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
A comprehensive report that outlines the importance of promoting physical activity.

Exercise and Physical Activity from the National Institute on Aging
https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-physical-activity
The National Institute on Aging
Provides numerous examples of safe exercises, self-tests, and sample exercise routines for older adults that can be used in groups or at home.

Administration for Community Living
www.acl.gov
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Provides a comprehensive overview of a wide variety of topics, programs, and services related to older adults and people of all ages with disabilities.
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