

Sit n' Fit program teaches older adults practical exercise techniques

AT A GLANCE

Moderate physical activity helps to improve physical and mental functions as well as reverse some effects of chronic disease to keep older adults active and independent.

The Situation

According to information obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), regular physical activity is essential to healthy aging. Moderate exercise three to five times per week for at least 30 minutes produces multiple health benefits for older adults (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1996). It can promote physical and psychological wellbeing and reduce risk of disability and vulnerability to chronic diseases in older adults (Sun, Norman, & While, 2013). Nevertheless, adults over 50 years of age are the least physically active segment of the U.S. adult population (National Center for Health Statistics, 2009). Information obtained from the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare shows an estimated one in four adults over the age of 65 are overweight (Body Mass Index [BMI] ≥ 25) or obese (BMI ≥ 30). The CDC estimates that the overall obesity rate will increase by 42 percent by 2020, driving up health care costs by \$550 billion dollars.

Our Response

An exercise program was developed to teach older adults aerobic exercises from a sitting position. This would allow this population the chance to get



Rupert chapter of Taking Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) Sit n' Fit group.

moderate exercise and potentially lower the possibility of injury.

UI Extension educator Becky Hutchings in Minidoka County taught older adults sit n' fit classes once a month for 10 months. Overall, twenty sessions were held at two locations, the Minidoka County Senior Citizen Center and the Rupert chapter of Taking Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS).

Program Outcomes

Becky Hutchings evaluated the participants at the end of the program to measure knowledge gained and intention to follow recommended behaviors. The participants in the program were both men and women and

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ranged in age from 55 to 90. The following is a summary of the questions and responses:

Were you engaged in moderate physical activity (three-five days/week) prior to the Sit n' Fit program? If so, please describe.

- 95 percent selected "No."
- 5 percent selected "Yes (biked/walked)"

What are some of the reasons you decided to start exercising with the Sit n' Fit program?

- To feel better/more healthy
- Lose weight
- To be fit

How do you generally feel before, during and after participating in the Sit n' Fit exercises?

- Before: tired, feel just okay, lethargic, like a slug, not good
- During: energetic, good, motivated, great, a good tired
- After: feel like I accomplished something great, more energetic, invigorated, feel great

What health benefit(s) do you feel you have obtained the most from attending the Sit n' Fit Exercise program?

- More energy, a greater awareness of my health, improve my strength and stability, I can breathe better, more flexibility in moving

References

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Sun, F., Norman, I. J., & While, A. E. (2013). Physical activity in older people: A systematic review. *BMC Public Health*, 13(449).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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3-18-bhutchings-sit-n-fit.docx • 2/18