

Eat Healthy • Be Active Community Workshops

Best Practices for Implementation



Before being released, the *Eat Healthy • Be Active Community Workshops* were pilot tested at 10 sites across the country, including cooperative extension, worksite wellness programs, faith-based organizations, and parent groups. The workshops were designed using low-health literacy principles and were tested with participants of varying socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels. After teaching the workshops, pilot site instructors provided feedback on their experiences. These are some of the best practices they shared.

Forming the workshop group

- Poll potential participants to determine the time of day that works best for them. If you are holding the workshops at a worksite, ask the supervisor if participants can bring their lunch and hold the workshops during the lunch hour. Keep in mind that participants may be more engaged and willing to come to the workshops during times of the year that are generally less busy. Consider starting the workshops after the holidays or after school starts.
- If you are teaching the workshop series more than once, ask your previous participants to share their positive experiences with friends and to suggest new participants for upcoming workshops.

Preparing for the workshops

- Although many of the pilot site instructors were dietitians or had previous experiences with nutrition information, you do not need a nutrition background to teach the workshop series. Many pilot site instructors noted that they were very comfortable teaching the workshops because of their existing nutrition knowledge. However, the workshops were designed to be used by a variety of community leaders and educators, even those without a nutrition degree. Be sure to thoroughly review the workshop concepts and lesson plan prior to teaching, and use the resources in the appendix for more information.

Adding additional materials to the workshops

- The Community Workshops are based on the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/>) and the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* (<http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/>). Therefore, the overall emphasis of the workshops is to provide individuals with tips and tools to eat healthy and be physically active to promote good health and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Depending on the particular needs of your participants, you may find you want to focus more attention on one area, such as setting goals to reach a healthy weight.
- Please use the Web links in the appendix of the Community Workshops materials to find additional handouts, tools, and resources to meet the needs of your participants. For example, if you have PowerPoint access, you may want to show the Portion Distortion Quiz (<http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/portion>) as a visual presentation on how food portions have changed.
- If you are interested in adding an additional challenge with specific goals over a 6-week period, incorporate the PALA+ Challenge (<http://www.fitness.gov/>) into the workshop series. PALA+ includes specific nutrition and physical activity goals each week, and participants can earn a certificate of achievement from the President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition.

Motivating participants to attend workshop sessions

- Collect email addresses or phone numbers either before or at the first workshop to provide reminders of upcoming workshops. Consider creating an online calendar to notify participants of upcoming workshops.
- If you are able, offer participants an incentive to come to each workshop, or the entire series of six. For example, provide items that help participants apply workshop concepts such as pedometers, reusable water bottles, or stretch bands for muscle strengthening activities. If you have larger items such as a cookbook, a gift certificate to a

grocery store, or a kitchen tool, consider holding a raffle at the end of the workshop series. For each workshop participants attend, they receive a raffle ticket, and the more raffle tickets they have at the end of the series, the more likely they are to win the prize!

- If participants already know one another, suggest that they “buddy up” to help motivate one another to try the tips at the end of each workshop and to remind one another of upcoming workshop sessions.
- To excite participants about the next workshop, at the end of each class, give participants a few highlights about what will be discussed and remind them of the “Things to try at home” listed at the end of each workshop.

Overall timing and answering questions

- Each workshop was designed to be completed in approximately 60 minutes, including time for a few questions and answers during or at the end of the workshop. However, if you are teaching a larger group with many questions, you may find you need more than 60 minutes to complete the workshop.
- If you’re running low on time, try these ideas to help limit the time you spend answering questions: Answer a few questions during the class but bring index cards for people to write down any questions that you don’t have time to address. Then, spend a few extra minutes during the beginning of the next workshop to answer these questions. This can be especially helpful if there is a question you need to look up more information to answer. Or if you have some extra time, consider staying after the class to address any lingering questions asked during the workshop.
- Consider the layout of chairs for your participants. Chairs that are close together may encourage more side conversations and/or questions during class and you may need to spend some time keeping everyone focused.

Enhancing stretch breaks and muscle strengthening activities

- The stretch break will come approximately halfway through the class. You may find it helpful to include this as an opportunity for everyone to get up and move around. If there are distracted participants, this can also be an opportunity to “restart” the class after the break.
- Consider playing music during the muscle strengthening session in workshop 6 and/or during the stretch breaks.
- If you are bringing canned soup or other canned goods for participants to use during workshop 6, give the cans to the participants to keep. Suggest that they keep the two cans at their desk at work or somewhere close at home as reminders to do the exercises. Suggest also that they keep a printed copy of the exercises close by.

Taste testing

- Many of the workshops include taste testing to allow participants to try some new foods or foods they do not frequently eat. Participants at pilot testing sites really enjoyed trying new foods, so you are encouraged to include these activities when you are teaching the workshops. Please be mindful of participants with food allergies. If you are bringing in packaged items, be sure to bring in the container so that participants can check the ingredients list if necessary.
- For the slow cooker recipe, you may want to prepare it ahead of time and bring it to class to taste test. If you are able to, also demo the recipe in class so participants can taste the food and see exactly how it is prepared. Keep in mind that if you start the slow cooker to cook during the workshop, it will not be finished before the end of class.

Last class

- To show your appreciation, make the last class a celebration of the group’s participation in the Community Workshops. You may choose to try a new recipe or bring in a different food to taste test. One instructor made yogurt parfaits with yogurt and fruit for everyone. Don’t forget to award every participant with a certificate of completion.