Whole Grain Foods: 
Developing a Curriculum 
With and for Older Adults

Why Whole Grains?
The older adult population will soar to nearly 20% of the U.S. population by 2030. Older adults are more likely to have a chronic health condition with 80% having at least one condition and 50% having at least two. Whole grain food consumption is associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, certain cancers, and improved weight management. The 2005 U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends at least three servings of whole grain foods each day, however, survey data indicates a typical daily intake is slightly less than one serving.

Developing the Curriculum Community Partners:
Project Team members from UNH Cooperative Extension and UNH Manchester met with community groups and agencies working with older adults to describe the Whole Grain Foods Curriculum project, to elicit suggestions, and discuss the logistics of focus group interviews with older adult volunteers. Many Manchester agencies were represented, although key external partners were Hillcrest Terrance Retirement Community, Morrison Senior Dining; the RSVP Program, NH Seniors Count; Prime Time; Stewart Property Management; and the City of Manchester Senior Services Department.

Focus Groups and the Curriculum Planning Group:
Focus groups were held at the following sites: Sundance Village, Francis Warde House, Prime Time, City of Manchester William B. Cashin Senior Center, and Hillcrest Terrace. The focus group interview questions uncovered what older adults wanted to know about whole grains and how to most effectively reach older adults with a whole grain food curriculum. The 44 focus group participants were asked to volunteer for the curriculum working group. Nine older adults volunteered and four curriculum development meetings were held. The participants’ insightful and valuable responses were utilized to design the curriculum.

The Whole Grain Food Curriculum, Designed with and for Older Adults:
The whole grain curriculum was designed and piloted with the curriculum planning group. The participants stated an interest in hands-on activities, such as reading labels and preparing simple whole grain foods, and making small changes at each meal to incorporate more whole grains. Following the guidance of the group, the whole grain curriculum will include three sessions – breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

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