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Fellowship Food:
Nourishing the Body and the Soul

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We encounter food in many places, from the bowl of candy on someone's desk to the doughnuts and cookies often served during "coffee hour" at faith communities. You may not want to swap the doughnut balls with brussels sprouts; however, you could offer smaller pieces of the treats and other food options, such as fruit.

Set a Good Example

Help people stay healthy by providing nourishing options. Many people shortchange themselves on fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Eating a diet rich in these foods can promote good health by helping reduce our risk of heart disease, cancer and other diseases.

If you are bringing a dish to a potluck, consider providing the veggies, fruits or whole grains. Bring a large nutrient-rich salad with a variety of greens and sprinkle with dried fruit and nuts or seeds. Bring whole-grain bread or crackers.

Consider these snack ideas from various food groups:

- **Grains Group:** Whole-grain minimuffins, banana bread or pumpkin bread, whole-grain crackers, air-popped popcorn, whole-grain cereal snack mixes
- **Vegetable Group:** Baby carrots, broccoli florets, cauliflower, salsa
- **Fruit Group:** Grapes, strawberries, cherries or melon chunks; whole fruits such as apples, bananas, oranges and plums; fruit cups; dried fruit
- **Dairy Group:** String cheese; low-fat or fat-free yogurt
- **Protein Foods Group:** unsalted or lightly salted nuts; low-fat bean dip

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Isn't "Healthy" Food More Expensive?

Nutritious food isn't necessarily more costly. Compare your options. For example, a bag of nacho chips might cost about $4. As an inexpensive, healthier snack, you could buy about 19 small bananas for the same price. The bananas are a potassium-rich, filling and portable snack without the fat and salt of chips.

Try Using Smaller Plates and Utensils

Self-serve buffets may tempt us to serve ourselves more than we need. Food psychology research has shown that utensil and container size make a difference when people serve themselves food.

In one study, participants were provided a large or small bowl and a large or small serving spoon for ice cream. Those who used the larger bowl served themselves 30% more ice cream. Those who used the larger serving spoon served themselves 15% more ice cream. Those who used a large spoon and large bowl took 57% more ice cream.

Source: Wansink B, van Ittersum K, Painter J. "Ice Cream Illusions: Bowls, Spoons, and Self-Served Portion Sizes." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine.* 2006;31(3):24–243.

Lessons Learned From a Faith-based Health Program

For several years, the "Body & Soul" program was used in faith communities in the U.S. to promote health among the members. A key goal was to promote increased intake of fruits and vegetables and lower-fat cooking methods.

The program from the National Institutes of Health provided some lessons for other faith communities through its four pillars: 1) pastoral leadership, 2) educational activities, 3) an environment that promotes healthy eating and 4) peer counseling.

- Pastoral leadership is considered vital to the success of a wellness program. The faith community leader is encouraged to speak about health and set a good example.
- Educational activities, such as food demonstrations, health screening and nutrition seminars, nutrition topics in church bulletins, newsletters and health fairs, can foster a healthier environment.
- Promote an environment that encourages healthy eating. Make healthy choices the norm. Establish a food policy to support sustainable change. Leadership and membership may change but the policy would live on. The Body & Soul program endorsed the establishment of a planning committee for food-related functions and the creation of food policies based on current nutrition recommendations.
- Peer counseling can strengthen a wellness program. Peer counselors offer support and encourage healthier eating.

Eat Smart. Play Hard. Together.

Nutrition and Health Resources

NDSU Extension handouts, etc: www.ag.ndsu.edu/food

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