

# They Made the Change To Healthy Food You Can Too!



**Glorietta Laeka (Zuni), Connie Lateyice (Zuni), Sadie Bitsoie (Navajo) and Ruby Mitchell (Navajo) (clockwise from left) learned that small changes in eating can have big results.**

It's snack time at a Southwest reservation community. Someone from the Gila River, Zuni, Salt River or urban Phoenix community reaches for something to nibble on. What would they reach for? Packaged snack cakes, cheesy chips or a can of pop? But things have changed! Sugar and fat-filled snacks are rarely found in some people's homes. In their places are fresh fruits and vegetables, yogurt, pretzels, sugar-free drinks and water.

Like many people, the members of the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) had thought about changing their lifestyle habits. Many wanted to eat better foods, be more active, and shed some pounds.

When they signed up for the DPP, some became part of the "lifestyle group." The people in this part of the study would learn about food choices, being more active and losing weight. They would learn what was good to eat and what

to avoid. They would also learn small steps that would lead to life-long habits of eating healthy food.

In short, DPP lifestyle group members would learn how to break the habit of eating chips, chocolate, cheeseburgers and curly fries. Many worked on slow changes and kept at it until the changes became a way of life. They did it! Now they usually reach for the right things to eat. Here's how they did it....

### **Improving food choices**

Many learned about the link between food choices and diabetes. They learned that high fat and high sugar food choices lead to weight gain. This extra weight can cause the body's insulin to not work as well as it should.

When you are overweight, your body's insulin may not work as well to move blood sugar into all your muscles and cells. Over time, the sugar builds up in the blood. When the sugar builds up in the blood, a person has diabetes.

For many of the DPP group members, this was the first time they understood how eating the wrong kinds of food can lead to diabetes. "I would always fix the family our favorite, chili cheese fries, all the time. But the DPP taught me how to eat better, not only me but my family as well," recalls Connie Lateyice (Zuni).

Slowly, members changed how they thought of food. Food became something the body needed to stay strong and healthy.

### **What's in that french fry?**

Each week the members met with their DPP lifestyle coaches. They talked about what is in food, the amount of fat and the calorie content. "I not only taught myself, but my husband, how much fat is in a large order of french fries," recalls Sadie Bitsoie (Navajo).

Glenda Fifer (Pima) says the DPP staff helped her learn many new things about food. "I didn't know how to make the right kinds of food choices. The information really helped me."

Knowing more about food helped DPP lifestyle members become aware of food choices. They were ready to start the small steps to change their eating habits.

### **What they did**

The DPP staff helped everyone learn the number of calories and amounts of fat in different foods.

Many began to eat less high-fat and high-calorie food. They chose more fruits, vegetables and low-fat meats. They learned new recipes and ways to cook. They started baking, boiling and broiling meats and other dishes. They fried foods less often.

Margaret Townsend (Shoshone) used to eat ice

cream and drink pop every day. "I dropped the ice cream and pop. I started eating vegetables and drinking water."

Some, like Glorietta Laeka (Zuni), cut way back on double cheeseburgers and potato chips. Ruby Mitchell (Navajo) quit her afternoon snack habit of fry-bread and pop. Emma Foster (Navajo) cut back on red meat, and started eating more whole grains and vegetables.

DPP lifestyle members also started reading labels, and eating smaller portions. "Now I know how to judge a portion of beans -- that's not a big pile of beans, but about half a cup," says Wilfred Wellington (Pima). To enjoy a regular-sized portion, Wilfred also learned to eat more slowly. "I chew my food many times, so I feel full when I'm finished."

But one of the greatest new habits was a surprise -- it was a new feeling of discipline.

**Wilfred Wellington (Pima) stopped eating "Pima portions" and started eating regular-sized portions of food.**



The group members learned to write down what they ate every day. This habit helped them notice what they were eating, and to make better choices. Keeping a list of what they ate gave them structure and control of their daily food choices. It is a habit many have stuck with. “I write down what I eat every day. I’m organized,” says Margaret.

“I keep a log and write down what I eat, the calories and fat grams. I feel accountable,” says Phyllis Smith (Navajo).

**Passing on the good habits**

With each passing day, members say sticking to the new habits became easier. Many saw results right away. After Margaret cut back on ice

**Phyllis Smith’s (Navajo) son Jonathan Whitesinger and her daughter Alyssa Smith enjoy more fruits and vegetables.**



cream and pop, she lost 20 pounds. Other members were also inspired by losing weight and gaining more energy. They were happy that they were passing on the good eating habits to others.

“My children are liking all the good food I now serve them,” says Connie. “They can’t seem to get enough fresh fruit. They really like it.”

Rosie Delgado’s (Pima) household of nine all made changes in what they eat. They are reaching for the right snack and the right portion size. They often by-pass chips, sweets and pop.

When Rosie sees her husband and children choosing low-fat and low-sugar food, it makes her feel good. “These changes will help them prevent diabetes,” she says.

Food Choices, Then and Now		
Name	What they chose then	What they choose now
Connie Lateyice (Zuni)	chili cheese fries, pop	a salad, apple or carrot sticks
Ruby Mitchell (Navajo)	burger, fries, potato chips	salads, fruit cocktail, pretzels
Phyllis Smith (Navajo)	after-work hamburger	after-work fresh fruit
Sadie Bitsoie (Navajo)	eggs, bacon, fried potatoes	skim milk, yogurt, toast
Rosie Delgado (Pima)	chocolate candy, cookies	yogurt, sugar-free cookies
Glenda Fifer (Pima)	fried meats	baked or broiled meats
Margaret Townsend (Shoshone)	buffet plates piled high	buffet salads, no dressing
Wilfred Wellington (Pima)	beans cooked with lard	beans cooked with water

