

Convida+

CHANGING EATING HABITS FOR HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE AGEING

ACTIVITY 3:

Development of curriculum about healthy and sustainable food for seniors

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CURRICULUM 1: Healthy food and nutrition as an element to prevent dependencies and diseases

(prepared by Acufade - Spain)

“Your Diet Is A Bank Account. Good Food Choices Are Good Investments.”

– Bethenny Frankel

1. Introduction

Ageing is a natural process that involves changes in different systems of the human body. These changes can lead to a decrease in the quality of life, increasing the vulnerability of older people to chronic and degenerative diseases. One of the most powerful tools to prevent diseases in the older population is healthy eating.

According to a study by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2018), a healthy diet can prevent up to a third of deaths worldwide and is essential for the maintenance of health and well-being at all ages. In this sense, it is important to highlight that a healthy diet is associated with a reduction in the incidence of chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, arterial hypertension, among others (Djoussé et al., 2011; Gopinath et al., 2014).

2. Theoretical background

The importance of healthy eating for older people

Healthy eating refers to a balanced diet that includes all the nutrients necessary to maintain good health and prevent disease. A balanced diet for older people is associated with a longer life expectancy, a better nutritional status, a decrease in the appearance of chronic and degenerative diseases, and an improvement in the quality of life.

According to a study from Harvard University (2018), a healthy and balanced diet can reduce the risk of mortality and improve the quality of life. Likewise, another study carried out in Spain (2015) found that older people who followed a Mediterranean diet, rich in fruits, vegetables, fish, olive oil and legumes, had a lower incidence of chronic diseases.

There are various strategies to promote healthy eating within the older population. One of them is nutritional education, which involves teaching older people about the benefits of healthy eating and how to implement it in their daily lives. According to a study conducted in Australia (2017), nutrition education is effective in improving nutrient intake and reducing the incidence of chronic diseases. In addition, it has been shown that participation in healthy eating programs, such as those based on the Mediterranean diet, improves quality of life and reduces mortality among older people (Kokkinos et al., 2014).

Nutritional recommendations for older people

The Mediterranean diet, characterized by a high consumption of fruits, vegetables, fish and olive oil, has been associated with a reduction in the incidence of chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer. In addition, the consumption of foods rich in antioxidants, vitamins and minerals can help prevent the appearance of neurodegenerative diseases. (Rodríguez-Monforte M et al 2013) (Limón-Miranda S et al, 2018) Additionally, a Mediterranean diet may also improve the quality of life of older people and reduce the risk of disability and dependency (Gopinath et al., 2015).

Older people have different nutritional needs due to the physiological changes that occur with ageing. The intake of proteins, vitamins and minerals is especially important to prevent

sarcopenia, loss of muscle mass and osteoporosis (Bauer et al., 2013). Besides this, the consumption of fibre and fluids is crucial to prevent constipation, a common condition in the older population (Kubota et al., 2015).

Importance of maintaining a healthy weight among older population

Maintaining a healthy weight is essential to prevent chronic diseases. A study from 2015 found that obesity of older people increases the risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes (Ho et al., 2015).

On the other hand, malnutrition is also a common problem among older people, which can lead to loss of muscle mass, weakness, and frailty (Visvanathan et al., 2015). Therefore, it is important to maintain a healthy and adequate weight to prevent all these conditions.

Importance of the involvement of public institutions

Healthy eating is essential for maintaining good health throughout life. However, in the case of older people, this becomes even more important, since it can prevent chronic diseases and improve the quality of life. In this theoretical framework, the importance of the involvement of public entities in the nutrition of the elderly and the impact that this has on their health will be discussed.

Public institutions have a fundamental role in promoting healthy eating among older people. This includes the implementation of public policies that promote access to nutritious and quality food, as well as the creation of education and awareness programs on the importance of healthy eating for older people. In addition, it is important that these institutions collaborate with civil society organizations and the private sector to improve the availability and accessibility of healthy foods for this population (WHO, 2018).

Impact of adequate nutrition on the health of older people: An adequate diet can have a positive impact on the health of an older person. Eating nutrient-dense foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein can help prevent chronic diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure, and cardiovascular disease. Likewise, an adequate diet can improve cognitive function, reduce the risk of depression, and improve the quality of life of older adults.

3. Suggested exercises

"Each country/partner should prepare a session regarding the above-mentioned issues and their local/national traditional cuisine. Is it healthy or not? What could be improved? Each partner is free to decide how to deliver this content. Below are some concrete examples!"

EXERCISE 1: Design your own menu

This activity will consist of explaining in a practical way how to plan a healthy menu for an older person. The Mediterranean diet will be used as a base, combined with a balanced lifestyle. The Mediterranean diet is based on the ingredients of the local agriculture of the Mediterranean countries, mainly Spain and Italy. Its characteristic is a low consumption of red meat and ultra-processed foods, together with an increase of vegetable origin, unsaturated fats and complex carbohydrates rich in fiber and antioxidants.

In this activity, users will be able to learn certain eating patterns such as:

- Use virgin olive oil as the main addition of fat.
- Consume lots of foods of plant origin: fruits, vegetables, legumes, mushrooms and nuts.
- Bread and foods from cereals (pasta, rice and especially their integral products) should be part of the daily diet (in limited quantity).
- Little processed, fresh and seasonal foods are the most appropriate.
- Consume daily dairy products, mainly yogurt and cheese.
- Red meat consumption should be limited and processed meats in even small quantities.
- Consume fish in abundance, giving special importance to oily fish rich in omega 3, together with a moderate consumption of eggs.
- Fresh fruit should be a usual dessert.
- Avoid processed products.

From this pattern each person can follow some instructions to choose foods mentioned above. Foods for a balanced diet will be recommended. This activity is intended for each person to learn about the consumption of the different food groups; a person should be able to plan

her/his diet, a healthy and balanced menu. Below you can see a simple template (in spanish) that can be used to design a menu.

Diseña tu propio menú

FRECUENCIA DE CONSUMO

LUNES		legumbres: 3 o 4 veces/semana
MARTES		Huevo de 1-4 semana
MIÉRCOLES		Hortalizas 2-4 raciones al día
JUEVES		Cereales integrales 4 raciones al día
VIERNES		Leche y derivados 2-4 raciones día
SÁBADO		Carne 2-4 raciones a la semana
DOMINGO		Pescado: 2 raciones a la semana
		Fruta: 3 raciones veces/semana

EXERCISE 2: “You are what you eat” (“Eres lo que comes”)

How to bring the principles of healthy food to people?

In this activity the basic principles and notions of nutrition and its influence on health will be presented and discussed. Food must be balanced, varied, safe and sustainable and the Mediterranean diet covers it all. Participants will learn about an appropriate diet for older people, stressing the importance of maintaining an adequate frequency of consumption of the different food groups such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, meats, lean, nuts, fish, eggs, among others. Participants of the workshop will learn how a proper diet can improve their quality of life.

- Example 1: Kitchen workshop

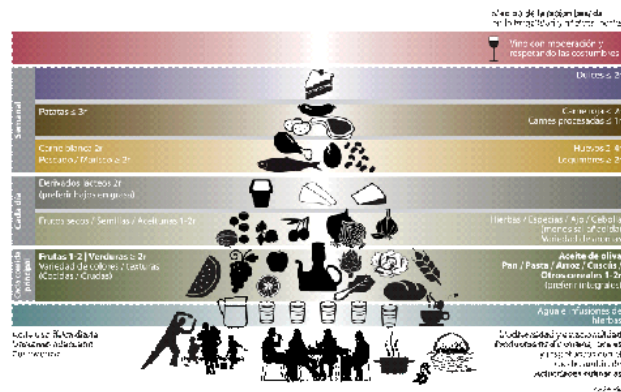
Canarian cuisine is rich in flavors and textures, with Spanish, African and South American influences. This can be seen in the different stews or casserole dishes.

In this workshop we will learn to prepare typical Canarian recipes in a healthy version, using seasonal and local foods. To do this, we will have a professional cook who will teach all those attending to make versions of typical Canarian recipes, making them healthier, while maintaining the nature of each dish.

An example of a possible typical Canarian dish could be “ropa vieja”, which is known for containing a large amount of fat and meat, for example, with respect to this dish, the idea would be to change different ingredients so that the dish contains less saturated fats.

This will be an opportunity to make participants of the workshop aware of the importance of reducing food waste, thus reducing environmental damage and spending of raw materials. To carry it out, the cook will use ingredients whose parts we normally waste and will provide us with different ideas to give them a second useful life. An example would be the stem of the broccoli or the leaves of the leek. At the end of the workshop, the group should suggest a recipe for a traditional meal, following healthy food principles and environmental aspects (local, seasonal, zero waste etc.).

IMAGES-



Note: We will be guided by this pyramid, but we will adapt it a bit to the adult population, more sedentary. In addition, we will change the recipes for a Canarian cheese or meat with potatoes, among other recipes, to healthier versions.



- **Example 2: Guided discussion**

The session will start with a short introduction about the importance of healthy food, supported by a ppt presentation. A discussion and exchange of ideas about healthier and climate friendly versions of traditional Slovenian recipes will be encouraged. The food manifesto will be presented and discussed. At the end of the workshop, the group will suggest a recipe for a traditional meal (starter, main dish, dessert), considering healthy food principles and environmental aspects (local, seasonal, zero waste etc.).

- **Example 3: What do you eat?**

The lesson will be held with the support of a nutritionist. Participants are divided into small groups and are given a blank sheet and a series of images representing different types of food (fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meat, pasta, rice, etc). The groups are asked to recreate their daily menu (from breakfast to dinner), using the images at their disposal. Once finished, the menus will be commented, and the nutritionist will explain to participants their mistakes and how to fix them.

EXERCISE 3: How to interpret the labeling

In this activity, the mentor (trainer, facilitator) will show the participants how to interpret the labeling of food products in order to make the right choice when shopping groceries. Each partner should find their own way to carry out this activity.

- **Example 1**

The nutritionist can prepare some labels of different products, some healthier and others not and explain the labeling system, what should be observed (see below) etc. In this way participants will learn to differentiate healthy products from the unhealthy ones.

Some basic ideas that will be taught are:

-Identify the different sugars: Sucrose, fructose, dextrose or corn syrup.

- Identify the different refined fats: corn, sunflower, palm or soybean oil.
- Identify hydrogenated fats

- Amount of salt: <0.5g per 100g of product
- Quantity of sugars: <5g per 100g of product

Things to know about labelling (to be translated):

Lo primero que debemos de saber es que los ingredientes de los alimentos que adquirimos aparecen ordenados de mayor a menor cantidad que haya en el producto, cuantos menos ingredientes lleve mejor, lo recomendable son un máximo de 5 ingredientes.

GRASAS SATURADAS: Si la cantidad de grasas saturadas se aproxima a la cifra del total de grasas que lleva el alimento, no es una buena opción.

AZÚCAR: Los azúcares añadidos son todos aquellos que los fabricantes, cocineros o consumidores añaden a los alimentos o las bebidas, evitar aquellos que lleven azúcares añadidos, y en el caso de que estos lo contengan, evitar aquellos que llevan más de 5 gramos de azúcares añadidos por 100 gramos.

SAL: La cantidad máxima de consumo de sal al día no debe superar los 5 gramos, evitar aquellos que contengan más de 1 gramo de sal por 100 gramos.

EDULCORANTES: Evitar un consumo excesivo de estos, ya que tienen efectos laxantes, llegando a causar flatulencias y diarreas, como puede ocurrir con el Maltitol o el Aspartamo. Los edulcorantes pueden alterar nuestro gusto por los alimentos, haciendo que encontremos menos atractivos alimentos naturalmente dulces como las frutas, y que prefiramos comer alimentos más azucarados.

HARINAS REFINADAS: Son aquellas cuyos granos enteros han sufrido un proceso industrial con el fin de conseguir partículas más finas, pero en dicho proceso han perdido gran parte de su fibra, así como de su calidad nutricional como en las harinas blancas. Por el contrario, los cereales integrales, ricos en fibra y bajo índice glucémico, no solo ofrecen mejores nutrientes sino que además, sacian y se han vinculado a una mejor salud.

GRASAS REFINADAS: Varios estudios demuestran que el aumento de la ingesta de aceites refinados aumenta considerablemente las enfermedades cardiovasculares, además del sobrepeso y la obesidad como ejes principales. Existen varios aceites refinados como el aceite de maíz, de girasol, de soja. La industria alimentaria utiliza este tipo de grasas para abaratar costes. La presencia de estos aceites en los etiquetados nos dice que el alimento es de mala calidad. Debemos de priorizar el aceite de oliva como grasa principal de nuestra dieta.

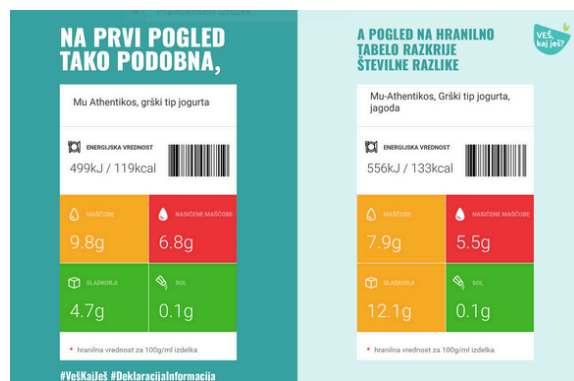
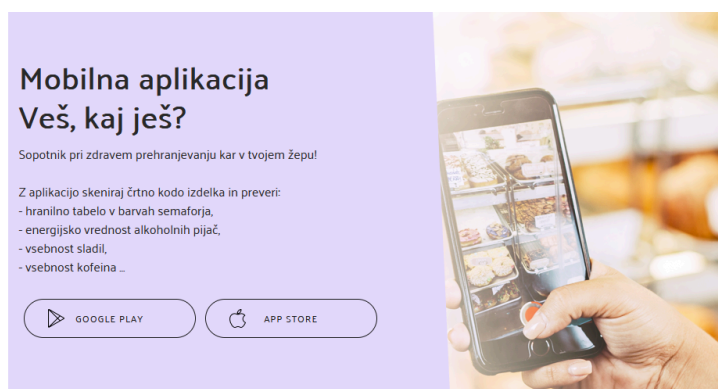
GRASAS HIDROGENADAS: Este tipo de grasas son perjudiciales para nuestra salud, ya que colaboran en la aparición de enfermedades cardiovasculares, aumentando los niveles de colesterol en sangre, entre esas grasas hidrogenadas encontramos el aceite de palma, la margarina o el aceite de colza. Estos se encuentran principalmente en la bollería industrial, pizzas industriales o en galletas. Debemos de priorizar el aceite de oliva como grasa principal de nuestra dieta.

POTENCIADORES DEL SABOR: Un potenciador del sabor es un compuesto químico que hace que los alimentos aumenten su sabor. Se emplean en muchos alimentos procesados para que sean más atractivos al consumidor, se deben evitar, pero sobre todo aquellos que contengan Glutamato Monosódico (E-621). A pesar de que se acepta como aditivo alimenticio, su consumo se relaciona con síntomas como: dolores de cabeza, migrañas, espasmos musculares, náuseas, alergias, depresión e irregularidades cardíacas.

- Example 2

The same topic can be addressed in a different way:

First the mentor will explain and demonstrate the website “Veš kaj ješ” (you-know-what-you-eat) <https://veskajjes.si/>, which offers a variety of information about healthy food, including recipes, advice, nutrition concepts, diets etc. After this initial presentation, the “veskajjes” mobile application will be presented, how it works, how it can be used etc. Participants will have support to download the application and try it on the spot, on some products (purchased before), by scanning the QR code. By taking part in this activity, the participants - older people - will also improve their digital skills.



- Example 3

This is the most simple exercise and does not require a lot of time or preparation. With the support of a ppt presentation, the nutritionist will explain to the participants how to properly read food labels, underlying the most important aspect to take into consideration when choosing which food to buy.

CURRICULUM 2: The importance of emotional awareness in order to change eating habits

(Prepared by ISRAA - Italy)

“To me, food is as much about the moment, the occasion, the location and the company as it is about the taste.”

– Heston Blumenthal, British celebrity chef

1. Introduction

In recent centuries, our relationship with food has undergone a profound transformation, from mere sustenance to a source of pleasure and social connection. While some view food primarily as fuel, others emphasize its enjoyment and communal aspects. However, this dual perspective isn't without its challenges, as modern lifestyles sometimes lead to unhealthy eating habits driven by stress or seeking pleasure.

To navigate this complexity, understanding and modifying our eating habits is essential. By integrating mindfulness—a practice focused on present-moment awareness—we can become more conscious of our food choices and responses. This mindful approach helps us strike a balance between nourishing our bodies and savoring the pleasures of eating, promoting overall well-being and satisfaction.

2. Theoretical background

Over the last two centuries, the relationship between humans and food has changed radically, thanks in part to easier access to greater quantities and quality of food.

This change has also produced a shift in the way we think about food. A study by Miele et al. (2002), proposes a categorisation along these lines, distinguishing between:

- Food as fuel
- Food as pleasure

The study shows how the culture related to food differs profoundly depending on the target population. In Western societies, food is increasingly seen as fuel, to be consumed quickly and then returned to.

In the Mediterranean area, however, the conception of food is linked to the idea of pleasure, sharing and sociality (it is no coincidence that the Slow Food movement developed in Italy).

Miele et al.'s distinction is not necessarily dichotomous. Food is certainly a fuel for our bodies and a correct intake of nutrients allows us to avoid tiredness, irritability and fatigue, but food is also pleasure and this is also confirmed to us from a neurobiological and evolutionary point of view: the brain is programmed to experience pleasure when experiencing something that is useful for survival.

Developed as a mechanism for subsistence in the days of hunter-gatherer societies, in the contemporary age its presence is not always positive, and this is particularly evident when food becomes the only means to relieve stress, combat boredom or as the only way to experience pleasurable feelings.

In support of this issue related to the adaptation of the reward mechanism, a study by Blumenthal and Gold (2010) showed how some of the neurobiological pathways involved in food consumption are the same as those implicated in drug abuse: dopaminergic reward pathways are responsible not only for the motivation to consume a food (or substance) but also for the sensation of pleasure produced by the intake (Dager, 2010). For this reason, addiction-related behaviours act not only in the immediate (the moment of taking the substance/food) - leading to the desired pleasure effect - but also at the moment when the substance is not taken, as the organism would otherwise fail to experience pleasurable feelings (Koob, 2009).

Eating without experiencing any pleasure can become frustrating and lead to a lack of motivation to eat, forcing oneself into exhausting diets. On the other hand, if food becomes the only source of pleasure and satisfaction, one runs the risk of becoming over-indulgent with oneself and exaggerating food quantities.

It is good to have the ability to strike the right balance between food as fuel and food as pleasure: to recognise the fact that it is important and necessary to consume a certain amount of nutrients, but also to feel satisfaction in eating healthy and wholesome food (Dennet, 2022). It is not easy, but if one is aware of the validity of this balance, changing one's eating habits will become easier.

A habit is a learned and automatic mechanism that the brain puts in place to maximise efficiency by minimising the expenditure of energy. Energy that would be required in case of new actions for which one does not already have a procedure to follow (Amaya et al., 2018).

Duhigg (2013) identifies 3 phases in a habit: signal (it is a switch that tells the brain to go into automatic mode and which habit to use), routine (can be physical, emotional or mental), gratification (based on this, the brain decides whether a certain routine is worth memorising).

One is not always aware of one's habits nor of the needs they would satisfy and that is why it is necessary to stop and understand which ones characterise each one (see IMAGE 1/Exercise 3), to become aware of the three phases identified by Duhigg and to work on the signal response. When one identifies the stimuli - and, therefore, becomes aware of what activates the signal-routine-gratification process - one can choose whether to continue in one's habit or modify it to bring about a change in one's behaviour.

One method used by psychology to deal with and change habits is **mindfulness**, *which focuses on awareness, cultivated by paying attention to every facet of the present moment, to be used in a non-judgmental, non-active manner and as openly as possible* (Kabat-Zinn, 2015). Focusing attention in this way allows one to be aware of one's actions, preventing the mind from being driven on 'autopilot' while occupied by worries or other distractions (see Exercise 1). In the case of changing habits, this approach is crucial because *“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom”* (Victor Frankl).

This definition helps to add a fourth phase in Duhigg's model: between the signal-stimulus and the routine-behaviour lies the intention, i.e., the willingness to pay attention to what arouses the stimulus in the individual, to be aware of possible response patterns and to decide on the behaviour to be enacted.

In the same way, one can become mindful (i.e., apply mindfulness) in eating.

The idea can be represented by means of the **mindful plate**: in an ideal plate, attitudes and intentions are placed to be pursued during one's eating. These are divided as follows:

- **Observe:** focus on your body, paying attention to the sensations you feel (sense of satiety, stress...);

- **Taste:** the focus shifts to the characteristics of the food eaten, from the aroma to the flavour, from the texture to the colour, but also to where it came from and the route it took to arrive on your table. Conceiving of food in this way allows you to have a broader view of what you are eating and to appreciate it more.
- **Live in the moment:** when one eats, one must do just that, without any distraction or interruption. One must be enveloped in the present experience. So, switch off the television, turn off the telephone and devote yourself to your meal.
- **Do not judge yourself,** be mindful about the negative thoughts, the rules everyone imposes on themselves or the guilt that arises in their minds. Accept them in a compassionate way, without letting them undermine your personal experience.

Following each of these eating behaviours can be helpful in achieving mindfulness when eating, to make eating no longer an automatic habit or routine but a moment of recollection and meditation ([see Exercise 2](#)).

Derived from mindfulness, *Mindful Eating* is a collection of practices designed to bring about changes in eating habits and allow proper intake of necessary nutrients (Monroe, 2015).

The proposed practices are:

1. Eat three smaller meals and three snacks a day: in this way, you can get the right amount of nutrients and avoid hunger pangs. The ideal, therefore, would be to eat every 2-3 hours.
2. Choose unprocessed food: this is useful for keeping blood glucose levels under control. In fact, the industrial diet does not consider the need for sugar in the blood, thus affecting the quality of life: low energy, irritable mood, poor concentration, are just some of the consequences of incorrect sugar intake. Choosing organic and seasonal food helps keep glucose levels under control leading to more energy, less desire to eat outside mealtimes, better sleep and more concentration.
3. Make meals and snacks as complex as possible: creating complex meals is necessary to better integrate the 3 main food groups (carbohydrates, proteins and fats) ([see IMAGE 2 "Food Groups"](#)) and allows you to take in a wide variety of nutrients and maintain balanced blood sugar levels. To make meals more complex, simply combine foods from different food groups; they do not require too much time to prepare, just a little planning and organisation.
4. Include colour and variety in your diet: if you include a wide variety of foods of different colours in your diet, you can best supplement the nutrients you need, as well as make every meal a feast for the eyes and mouth. This prevents meals from becoming something boring and habit-forming, which could lead to the search for desserts and snacks outside mealtimes.
5. Making friends with fat: fat has often been associated with chronic diseases typical of Western society, leading to the belief that it is something to be avoided at all costs. As

with proteins and carbohydrates, it is essential to incorporate a wide range of fats into one's diet as a lack of or incorrect intake of them could lead to health problems. The fats that need to be supplemented the most are unsaturated and polyunsaturated fats (contained, for example, in fish and olives), followed to a lesser extent by saturated fats (contained in foods such as sweets, cheese and red meat).

6. Drink plenty of water: water is essential to transport nutrients and oxygen to the cells, to regulate temperature and to help dispose of waste products. In terms of hydration, water can hardly be beaten, as other elements such as tea or coffee, fizzy drinks or alcohol tend to dehydrate. However, there is no need to avoid these beverages but simply to reduce their consumption and be aware of one's drinking habits. A good intake of water allows more energy, better concentration and, above all, decreases perceived hunger.
7. Have breakfast as soon as possible after waking up: breakfast - in terms of health and well-being - is the main meal of the day. When you choose to eat a rich breakfast shortly after waking up, your body uses the energy assimilated to get the day off to a good start because it sets a positive tone for the rest of the day.
8. Plan your meals in advance: planning in advance allows you to make conscious and careful choices about what you are going to eat during the day, without relying on chance (or the food in the fridge). You can use a diary in which you write down the meal and the ingredients needed to prepare it, to avoid unnecessary food waste and aim for greater sustainability.
9. Allow yourself the food you love, in moderation: this is the simplest yet most fundamental principle of mindful eating. A healthy diet must not lead to restriction or deprivation but, instead, must consider the pleasure that comes from eating. Eating should not become a source of frustration but a way of feeling good about oneself.

3. Suggested Exercises

"Each country/partner should prepare a session regarding the above-mentioned issues and their local/national traditional cuisine. Is it healthy or not? What could be improved? Each partner is free to decide how to deliver this content. Below are some concrete examples!"

Mindfulness distinguishes between formal and informal practices. The first are those marked by a beginning and an end, there are clear instructions to follow, and its course is well defined. Informal practices are all daily activities (of any kind and duration) that are transformed into moments of awareness. The first two exercises are formal practices of mindfulness: the first one helps to take awareness off the autopilot and the difficulty of staying focused on the present experience, the second is useful to learn how to involve the 5 senses in tasting a food. The texts should be read in a calm and relaxed tone to allow participants to focus only on the words and sensations they are experiencing. It is appropriate to identify the beginning and the end of the exercises with a distinctive sound (a gong or a bell chime) to allow the participants to identify the end of the exercise. Meditation techniques, usually, should be performed while sitting on the ground on cushions or in a chair in a quiet and distraction-free environment.

After each exercise, ask the participants for feedback and discuss their feelings, thoughts and ideas.

EXERCISE 1: Recognising the unstable mind (do nothing)

(duration 5 minutes)

The exercise is guided by the mentor, who is speaking slowly and observing the participants to make sure they understand and follow the instructions properly.

- Sit comfortably and keep your back straight.
- After sitting comfortably, relax, keeping your eyes open if possible and experiencing the present moment. Feel the weight of your body resting on the chair and the floor. Be aware of the space around you. Notice how easy it is to experience panoramic vision and how you naturally become aware of sounds and other sensory stimuli - for example the smell of food coming from the window next door or the wind gently caressing your cheeks. This practice is simple: you allow yourself to be there, experiencing what happens while you sit and do nothing. You decide to sit and do nothing.
- Very quickly you will find yourself thinking about something, even though you have decided not to do anything. When you realise that you are thinking, simply bring your attention back to being present without doing anything. Again, before you know it, you

will be carried away by some thought. And again, when you realise it, return your attention to being present without doing anything.

EXERCISE 2: Eating aware

(duration 20 minutes)

For the development of this exercise, we used raisins, given its particular consistency and texture, but other foods can be used, such as cherries or strawberries. The important thing is that they allow you to dwell on texture, consistency and flavour. Before carrying out the activity it is important to inquire if any of the participants does not eat the proposed food and find an alternative.

Mentor reads aloud and slowly the following instructions:

We are now going to do a practice that can help us switch off our autopilot.

So now, I invite you to try a short exercise to see what it is like when we bring our full awareness to a simple everyday experience of eating.

Take a grape in the palm of your hand and imagine that you have never seen anything like it before. You pick it up and look at it closely, with your full attention.

Notice the texture, the color, the shape, the folds and hollows, the light shining on it. Take the time to really see it and explore it with your eyes.

If your mind wanders to other thoughts, other places, simply notice where it has gone and gently bring your attention back to the sultana.

Now explore what it feels like to feel it, try pressing it with your fingers, maybe even bring it to your ears, see if it makes a sound.

And bring it to your nose, see if it smells and notice if you have any reaction to the smell, maybe in your mouth, salivation increases.

And now bring the object to your lips, notice how your hand know exactly where to go.

Perhaps running it along your lips, noticing the reaction, perhaps saliva.

And when you are ready, put it in your mouth, not chewing it yet.

Notice the sensations in your mouth, perhaps exploring it with your tongue.

Finally, get ready to chew the berry, bring it to the right place, bite it, notice the taste and texture in your mouth.

While continuing to chew, pay close attention to the taste of the object.

And when you feel ready to swallow, notice your intention to swallow, and there actually swallow the berry, seeing if you can follow it as it descends to your stomach.

Notice other sensations.

How do you feel after the exercise?

Now, take the other available object (fruit, nuts or...) and repeat the exercise, slowly exploring this new object with each of your senses.

EXERCISE 3: Recognising cycle of habits

This exercise can be useful to give an example of how one's habits work (Duhigg cycle): the participant identifies a habit that he/she would like to change (sets an intention), identifying what is the trigger that activates it and the gratification that reinforces it. Once these are identified, the old routine used is identified and a new one is proposed.

IMAGE 1: [Circle of Habits](#) (Ita – Eng)

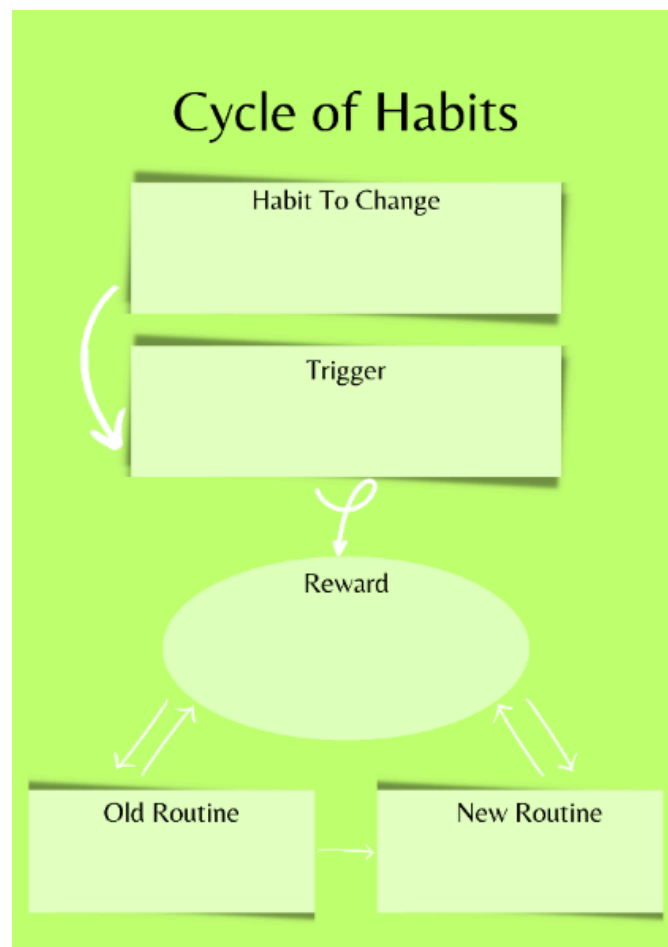


IMAGE 2: [Food groups](#)

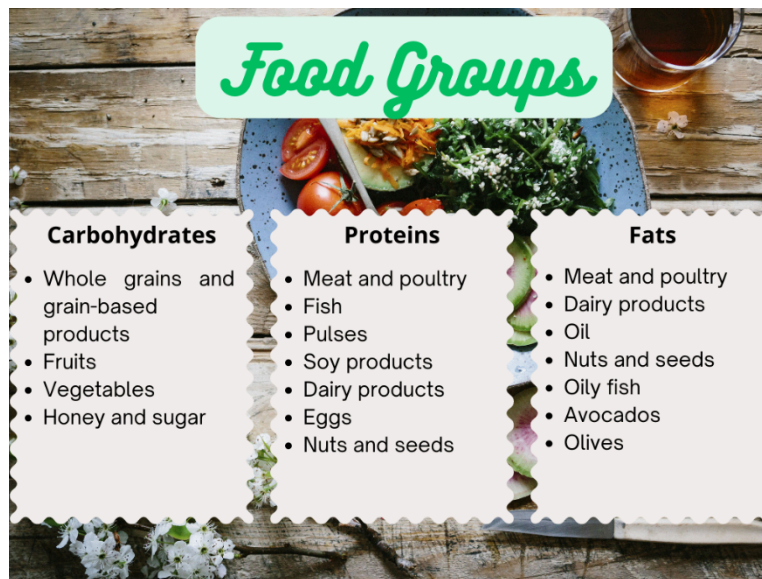


IMAGE 3: Mindful Plate



VIDEO 1: [Mindful Eating Meditation](#) (Ita) (for exercise 2)



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VIDEO 2: [Tips Mindful Eating](#) (Eng)

(Visual explanation of some of the 6 proposed mindful eating practices)



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or: <https://foodinsight.org/6-tips-for-mindful-eating-video/>

VIDEO 3: [Mindfulness in Eating](#) (Eng) (rapid explanation about the importance of mindfulness in eating)



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CURRICULUM 3: Healthy food and nutrition as an element to support more sustainable and eco-friendly life

(Prepared by IAT - Slovenia)

"The climate emergency demands action from all of us. We need to get to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and everyone has a role to play"

– Niklas Hagelberg, UNEP's Climate Change Coordinator

"The link between healthy people, healthy societies and a healthy planet puts sustainable food systems at the heart of the European Green Deal, the EU's sustainable and inclusive growth strategy. It is designed to boost the economy, improve people's health and quality of life, and care for nature."

– EU Green Deal

1. Introduction

Why should we care?

...Older people may be physically, financially, and emotionally less resilient to the effects of climate change. At the same time baby boomers currently have the highest carbon footprint of any other age group. While older people are concerned about climate change, they do not feel they will be directly affected. Nor do they feel they can personally take action to stop it. Older people want to do their bit to tackle climate change and reduce their carbon emissions but there is uncertainty over which actions are best to take" ...

Older People and Climate Change: The Case for Better Engagement

<https://www.sei.org/publications/older-people-climate-change-case-better-engagement/>

The path to a sustainable, climate-neutral society is not possible without a change in the way we eat. Food is more than what we eat. It is one of the basic components of our societies and

cultures, of our world. But this world has been increasingly affected by the consequences of climate change, which are manifesting in higher temperatures, changed rainfall patterns and more frequent and severe extreme weather events such as storms, droughts and floods.

Good food keeps us healthy and helps us reach our potential. But the way we produce, sell and consume food is harming our environment. This must change, on a global and personal level. Food needs to be grown and processed, transported, distributed, prepared, consumed. Each of these steps creates greenhouse gasses that contribute to climate change.

About a third of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions is linked to agriculture and land use: methane from cattle's (cow, sheep) digestive process, nitrous oxide from fertilizers used for crop production, carbon dioxide from cutting down forests for the expansion of farmland, other agricultural emissions from manure, rice cultivation, burning of crop residues, and the use of fuel on farms. Many countries, institutions and companies have committed to reduce their emissions while the EU has even set the objective of being "climate neutral" by 2050.

Eating, traveling, heating your home... all contribute to the emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere. The latest survey by the European Consumer Organisation shows that two thirds of European consumers are willing to change their eating habits for environmental reasons.

Climate-friendly food is:

- Mostly vegetarian (plant-based foods)
- Produced in sustainable - organic or biodynamic way.
- Produced locally and purchased as directly as possible from local or fair-trade producers.
- Seasonal
- Processed as little as possible.
- Packaged as little as possible.
- Which does not end up in the waste.

For a successful transition to a climate-neutral society, it is important to follow these guidelines for more climate-friendly meals as much as possible.

2. Theoretical background

What can be done on the global level?

A climate-friendly eating means rethinking the **entire food system**. Shifting people to a new diet that is healthier for both the planet and for our bodies requires changes in the way food is grown, sold and eaten. The standard diet – industrially produced with plenty of meat and dairy – is already known to be bad for people's health, but it could also be bad for the environment.

Animal-based foods, especially red meat, dairy, and farmed shrimp, have highest greenhouse gas emissions.

Plant-based foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, peas, nuts, and lentils – generally use less energy, land, and water, and have lower greenhouse gas effects.

But animal products remain an important source of food security, nutrition, and livelihoods for large numbers of rural populations around the world. Improved feeding techniques can reduce methane generated during cattle's digestion.

Smaller herd sizes, with fewer, more productive animals can also help. And better agricultural practices, such as improved manure and fertilizer management, rotational maintenance of healthy soil to store carbon can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

At the same time, **reducing food waste** is crucial. Almost 17% of all food available to consumers worldwide – goes into trash bins every year. Producing, transporting, and letting that food rot contribute more than 8 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

What can you do – on the personal level?

Cut your food waste

Try to minimize the waste. When you throw out food, you are also wasting the energy used to grow, produce, package and transport it. Only buy what you need – and use what you buy. You can save money, reduce pollution, and help preserve resources for future generations. Some of our food waste can be composted rather than end up in the bin.

Eat healthier meals

Limit red meat consumption, especially beef. Select fish from sustainable fishing (to avoid overfishing). Start eating a more balanced diet and reduce foods that need more natural resources, especially water.

Flexitarian diet (an example of a healthy compromise):

Flexitarian is a marriage of two words: flexible and vegetarian. It is a semi-vegetarian style of eating that encourages eating less meat and more plant-based foods. Because there are no specific rules or suggestions, it is an attractive option for people who want to reduce the use of animal products.

Buy local food

Transporting food around the world takes a lot of energy. Buying local food supports your local economy and lowers the carbon emitted to get that food on your table. Local and seasonal food tastes better. There are different understandings of what is local, it also depends on national and local context. In Slovenia environmental organisation Umanotera has defined local as food that is produced within a radius of 80 km. The British Consumer Organisation classifies as "local" production in an area up to 600 km away, or one day's train journey.

Zero-kilometer concept

This concept first appeared in Italy. It means that the food has not travelled far or “zero kilometer” before being eaten. This approach to food not only ensures the freshness in flavour but it minimizes the environmental impacts of production as well. The movement proposes reducing the distance between producers, sales and consumers to a radius of less than 100 kilometers.

Home and urban gardening (also known as urban horticulture or urban agriculture)

is the practice of growing plants and cultivating a garden in an urban environment. It has a positive impact on the economy, the environment, local community and food security. It can be done in front and backyards, balconies, indoor greenhouses, rooftops, or patios. With urbanization and since more people would like to do their farming where they are, urban gardening has proven to be a successful alternative.

Prepare sustainable meals

More and more leading chefs and restaurants are focusing on local and organic food and shifting away from meat-heavy meals and fast food. They are joined by a growing movement of people changing the way they cook and eat. Try recipes for dishes that are not only delicious but also good for you and the environment.

Use reusable shopping bag

Reusable shopping (or grocery) bags have no environmental impact. They are made from recycled or sustainable materials and are designed to be used multiple times.

Besides polluting the ocean and environment, plastic bags clog up sewers and cause irreparable damage to nature. Bring your own reusable bag, it can seriously reduce the amount of plastic waste in our world.



Image by pch.vector on Freepik

Save water

Sea water is a precious resource: using water smartly can help ensure that we continue to have clean water to drink, wash and stay healthy. Do not keep the tap running when washing fruits or vegetables or dishes; or re-use this water for watering plants.

Use eco-friendly cleaning products

A lot of cleaning products have a lot of harmful chemicals in them that are not environmentally friendly. Repeated exposure to these cleaning products can affect your health as well as the environment. Eco-friendly and healthy alternatives: white vinegar, lemon juice, bicarbonate of soda, salt, citric acid.

Avoid products with excessive plastic packaging

Buy in large quantities. This will save you money on top of reducing packaging waste.

Buy loose products, such as fruits and vegetables, instead of pre-packaged packs.

Reuse packaging products, like paper and plastic bags, tins and wrapping paper whenever possible. When possible, choose cans over glass over plastic.

Carry your own reusable bag, water bottle, coffee cup, straw and utensils.

Small changes can make a big difference in the long run.

3. Suggested exercises

"Each country/partner should prepare a session regarding the above-mentioned issues and their local/national traditional cuisine. Is it healthy or not? What could be improved? Each partner is free to decide how to deliver this content. Below are some concrete examples!"

EXERCISE 1: Get up & sit quiz

Prepare some (at least 10) statements or questions and ask all participants to stand up if they agree and to sit down if they disagree. Keep it short, simple and local.

After the quiz you can have discussions about the statements or questions.

Some example statements:

- I always use reusable bags for shopping for groceries.
- When buying fruits and vegetables in the supermarket I always check where they come from.
- Older people (on the average) are not willing to change their habits to fight climate change.
- Every one of us can help limit global warming and take care of our planet.
- Only young people should act against climate crises; this is their fight!
- I believe you cannot teach an old dog new tricks (it is impossible to change the habits of older people).

EXERCISE 2: Tasting event

Organise a tasting event with a variety of little healthy snacks made from climate friendly (local, seasonal etc.) and healthy ingredients. You can also ask the participants to prepare their own snacks and bring them to the next tasting event. Invite them to share the recipe, where they buy the ingredients, and how they prepared it.

Taste, comment, compare, exchange similar recipes.

EXERCISE 3: Where does this apple come from?

Ask participants to think of their favorite fruit and vegetable.

Where can you get or buy it? Where do they come from (most likely)?

Ask participants to think of all the possible ways food makes it to their plate. Which fruits are locally produced, and which came from far away? Compare the way how a banana and an apple came to our table.

Themes and questions for groups discussion:

Have a group discussion about topics such as:

- What makes it difficult to buy and consume locally grown food?
- Why are locally grown vegetables usually more expensive than imported, from far-away countries?
- Do you know a recipe for a plant-based version of your favourite meat dish?
- What type of foods or groceries do you usually throw away?
- What foods are currently in season where you live?
- Do you have access to a shop or farmers market with food from local growers?
- Are you willing to change your eating habits for environmental reasons?

For more topics for discussion - see chapter 3.

Read each section (paragraph) carefully and discuss it with participants.

Source:

- Act now - United Nations: <https://www.un.org/en/actnow>
- <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/food>
- https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en
- <https://www.ecoandbeyond.co/reduce-packaging/>
- <https://foodprint.org>
- Hasic project toolkit for promoting healthy ageing: <http://www.hasicproject.eu/en>