

# Factors Affecting Older Adults' Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

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## INTRODUCTION

- ❑ Accompanying the longer lifespan in the older adult population are chronic diseases and illnesses that can increase healthcare costs and decrease quality of life.
- ❑ Diets rich in fruits and vegetables (F/V) are high in phytochemicals which are compounds that may help protect against chronic disease by lowering the effects of oxidative stress and inflammation.
- ❑ This research project aimed to assess if voluntary attendance at nutrition education sessions improved older adults' F/V intake as measured by a carotenoid palm scanner (picture displayed on the top left).



## METHODS

- ❑ Before educational sessions began, a total of 86 individuals' palms were scanned and recorded. These individuals were members at the St. Clair Senior Center in Murfreesboro, TN.
- ❑ Eight educational sessions took place at the center over a four-month period which focused on practical ways to increase intake of fruits and vegetables in the diet through food demonstrations.
- ❑ An average of fifteen individuals attended each session. Ages of participants ranged from 56 to 92 years old.
- ❑ After all demonstrations were complete, participants' and nonparticipants' palms were scanned again and compared to previous scans.
- ❑ The following recipes were demonstrated at the educational sessions:
  - butternut squash soup
  - sweet potato fries
  - tomato basil soup
  - vegetable soup
  - pumpkin muffins
  - roasted fall vegetables
  - pumpkin-butterscotch gingerbread trifle



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## RESULTS

- ❑ Out of those who attended the sessions:
  - nine out of fourteen had an increase in palm scores
  - one individual's score stayed the same
  - four had decreases in scores
- ❑ Out of those who did not attend the sessions:
  - nine individuals had an increase in scores
  - eight had decreases in scores
- ❑ Individuals who attended sessions and had increases in scores had considerable increases in palm scores compared to those who did not attend.

## DISCUSSION & FUTURE PLANS

- ❑ Despite the small sample size, educational sessions improving individuals' F/V intake seems promising, and ongoing research is suggested to provide more evidence correlating attendance to sessions and increases in F/V intake.
- ❑ To resolve the issue of obtaining an adequate amount of score data, in the future, researchers will request participant contact information.
- ❑ MTSU nutrition and dietetics students will continue to present nutrition education at the senior center due to increased requests from those who participated in this research.