



# Health Matters: The Exercise and Nutrition Health Education Curriculum for People with Developmental Disabilities

*Beth Marks "RN Ph.D.", Jasmina Sisirak M.P.H., Tamar Heller Ph.D.*

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For people with disabilities, a good health and nutrition program can have life-changing results: more energy, increased knowledge, more confidence and self-esteem, and fewer serious health issues such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. This innovative, easy-to-implement curriculum is the perfect way to help adults build healthy lifestyles—and as a bonus, help communities reduce the high costs of common health problems.

A research-based, field-tested program that's already made a dramatic difference in the lives of participants with disabilities, this proven curriculum shows professionals how to conduct up to 59 one-hour sessions that help people make the best choices about health, exercise, and nutrition. Through lively discussions and activities, adults with a wide range of disabilities will

- increase their commitment to exercise and good nutrition by learning the benefits of physical activity, exercise, and healthy food choices
- develop clear exercise and nutrition goals and stick to them
- master the practical aspects of an exercise routine, including dressing appropriately, using proper breathing techniques, and doing cool-down exercises
- learn how their medications may affect their body, physical activity, and eating habits
- monitor their heart rate and blood pressure during exercise
- identify foods that make up a well-balanced diet
- locate places to exercise and use equipment safely
- improve their self-advocacy and self-esteem so they can make good choices and stay healthy
- create a group exercise video they can use at home once the program is over
- and much more

This single resource includes everything professionals need to run successful health education sessions: complete instructions on running the program, adaptable instructor scripts for each lesson, weekly newsletter templates for participants that summarize key points, extensive appendices on assessment and Universal Design strategies, and all the participant handouts and worksheets on a convenient CD-ROM for easy printing.

With this engaging, hands-on curriculum, people with disabilities will have the motivation and skills they need to improve and maintain their health—and fewer health problems translate into saved time, money, and staffing resources for whole communities.

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