

Healthy eating is at a supermarket near you

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Supermarket "grocery store tours" could be the key to healthier lifestyles and prevent chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease (CHD) concludes a study published in the *Health & Fitness Journal*.

Although healthy eating advice is generally well understood, it isn't always easy to put into practice. To address this, researchers at the University of Bristol's Department of Exercise, Nutrition and Health Sciences arranged for practical nutrition-education sessions 'with a difference' to take place in local supermarkets.

The study Prevent it: using grocery store tours as an educational tool to promote heart health looked at whether grocery store tours are a popular and successful method of informing people about healthy-eating.

A "grocery store tour" is a group educational session held at the participant's normal supermarket rather than in a clinical or work site setting. A nutritionist or dietician guides the session, providing information on healthy food choices and demonstrating how to read a food label. Members of the group share with each other healthy shopping tips and recipes for nutritious and enjoyable meals.

The researchers ran and evaluated eight of their own "heart-healthy" tours. The tours were free and covered all the practical evidence-based dietary advice believed to influence risk for CHD.

The study found the tours are an effective way in increasing nutritional knowledge with 75 per cent of the group saying they felt they had

learned a lot of new information. Longer-term effectiveness of the tour was assessed using a postal questionnaire in which group members reported a range of healthy dietary changes.

A variety of health practitioners with group facilitation skills and relevant nutritional knowledge could successfully run these tours and they should be considered as an alternative to conventional methods of nutrition education. This may be particularly effective in situations where existing healthcare resources are stretched to meet increasing demands.

Sue Baic, co-author of the study and Lecturer in Nutrition and Public Health at Bristol University, said: "The promotion of healthier lifestyles to help prevent chronic diseases is a worldwide public health priority.

"Our research has found grocery store tours are a popular and effective method of nutrition education for people interested in heart health and for those at risk of CHD and other chronic diseases."

Source: University of Bristol

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