

Diabetes email challenge provides remote learning throughout the United States

AT A GLANCE

Remote participants learned new diabetes information to make progress towards their SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) goals.

The Situation

About one in every ten people in the United States have diabetes. Diabetes self-management programs, such as Dining with Diabetes (DWD), continue to make impacts in the lives of participants and their families even throughout a global pandemic.

Our Response

The National Extension Dining with Diabetes (NDWD) Working Group leadership recognized the importance of being innovative to find new ways to reach people with diabetes who were isolated due to the pandemic. A DWD Email Challenge committee of five educators from Kansas State Extension, Mississippi State University Extension, Purdue Extension and University of Idaho Extension created a four-week DWD Email Challenge that was first piloted in May of 2020 and was offered nationally in November 2020. In November 2021 the DWD Email Challenge was offered nationally by Julie Buck and Laura Sant, University of Idaho Extension educators. The goals and objectives were to help individuals learn strategies to manage their diabetes through menu planning, carbohydrate counting, portion control and label reading.



The online DWD Email Challenge is supported by the National Extension Dining with Diabetes Working Group. Photo Pixabay.

Program Outcomes

Each week participants received two emails. The first one asked the participants to learn about a subject such as carbohydrates. The second email asked participants to act and to reflect on the information they learned. Participants were encouraged to join a private Facebook group to reflect on their learning, receive answers to their questions and have continual engagement.

The May 2020 Dining with Diabetes Email Challenge pilot had 228 participants. Of these participants, 63 (27.6%) filled out the initial baseline survey via Qualtrics where they set a SMART goal for themselves and estimated their personal confidence level about making progress towards accomplishment (scale of one to

10; one = not confident at all; 10 = extremely confident). Of the 17 participants who completed the final evaluation, 11 (64.7%) indicated they felt positively about the progress made towards their SMART goal. Thirteen (76.5%) indicated they learned new information because of the Dining with Diabetes Email Challenge and 15 (88.24%) indicated they would recommend the Dining with Diabetes Email Challenge to a friend, family member or co-worker. One participant shared, “I have been able to have good control of my diabetes for the past several years. I took the challenge to remind myself of good diabetes habits to help me do even better. Your information was helpful.” Another shared, “I took this course to help our special needs son do a better job of managing his Type 2 diabetes. We have his fasting blood sugar pretty well stabilized, and his snacking is under much better control.”

The November 2020 program had 380 participants. Of these participants, 48 (12.6%) filled out the initial Qualtrics survey. An average of 17 (4.47%) individuals completed the weekly Qualtrics surveys tracking progress towards accomplishing their SMART goal (range of eight to 30 individuals). The final Qualtrics survey was completed by 32 (8.42 %) individuals which was an improvement from our original pilot.

Of the 32 participants who completed the final evaluation, 26 (81.25%) indicated they felt positively about the progress made towards their SMART goal. Additionally, 26 (81.25%) indicated they learned new information because of the email challenge, and 27 (84.38%) responded that they would recommend the email challenge to a friend, family member or co-worker. One participant shared, “I loved the email challenge and when I received the email yesterday stating that it was over, I was sad. It is a great tool to help with learning more about diabetes. I would highly recommend it to everyone!” Another participant shared, “I am using the new information I learned to become better educated on diabetes and the impact it has on my health.” A third participant said, “Just had

to share. This is the first morning in a long, long time that my blood sugars have been in range-104. I have accepted the challenge and am tracking food consumption and being honest with myself and walking every day.”

The November 2021 program had 13 participants. Of these participants, eight (61.5%) filled out the initial Qualtrics survey. An average of four (30.8%) completed the weekly surveys tracking progress towards their goals (range two to seven individuals). Four (30.8%) participants completed the final survey. Of those who completed the final evaluation, three (75%) indicated they felt positively about the progress made towards their SMART goal. Additionally, three (75%) indicated they learned new information because of this email challenge, and four (100%) responded that they would recommend this email challenge to a friend, family member or co-worker. See Table 1 for results.

Table 1. DWD Email Challenge Survey Results

DWD Email Challenge	Participants (n)	Completion of First Survey n(%)	Completion of Final Survey n(%)
May Pilot 2020	228	63/27.6	No significant results
November program 2020	380	17/4.47	32/8.42
November program 2021	13	8/61.5	4/30.8

The Future

As a result of the initial pilot program, the Dining with Diabetes Email Challenge will be continued as a new program supported by the NDWD curriculum subcommittee chair. A best practices document was created to guide Extension educators who want to present the program in their regions.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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