

Cook up new way to live

Hospital class touts big benefits of plant-based diet

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Veal is out, veggies are in. Forget the eggs and stock up on the edamame.

A five-week class at Cape Coral Hospital is teaching more than 30 participants the benefits of ditching animal fats in favor of a plant-based diet.

"We want to empower them to a new way of living, and provide alternatives to eating out," said Evelisse Capo, class leader and pharmacist.

The Food for Life class is part of the Cancer Project, a not-for-profit collaborative of physicians, nutritionists and researchers nationwide that aims to help people prevent and survive cancer. The Cape Coral class had a few cancer patients and survivors and more people who want to make a lifestyle change before it's too late.

"We want to help people with cancer prevention and health, heart disease, diabetes and high cholesterol," Capo said.

The class was open to anyone and was filled before the first meeting.

Barbara Leite, who is pregnant with her third child, brought her daughter, Alaina Sands, 11.

"I want to learn to cook better for my family," Leite said. "Everybody in the family wants to eat better."

Alaina confessed to a penchant for steak, ribs and chicken wings, but said she is ready to make a change.

"I want to learn new foods," she said.

Capo showed the class two videos that included quizzes at the end. Participants learned that meat and dairy products do not contain fiber, an essential component for a healthy heart. Afterward, she prepared guacamole salad, bean burritos, bean salad, breakfast shakes and quinoa for tasting.

Ron and Carolyn Kerlin who took the class last April, are in it a second time. They enrolled the first time after Ron Kerlin was diagnosed with prostate cancer.

"He's willing to do anything," Carolyn Kerlin said of her husband. "The diet was the one thing we had control over."

Since changing their diet to plant-based foods the couple have eliminated all meat products from their diet and learned a new way of cooking. As a result they both lowered their cholesterol by 30 points and have noticed increased energy.

"I changed my whole way of cooking," Carolyn Kerlin said. "This has been a challenge for me, and a delight."

Kerlin said that she still peruses new recipes in popular magazines.

"I just convert them to our way of thinking," she said. "I challenge anyone to tell the difference."

Kerlin has found substitutes for chicken, bacon, sausage, cheese and milk.

Ron Kerlin said he doesn't miss his former diet.

"I feel better than I did before I was diagnosed with cancer," he said. "I eat lots more but I've lost about five to eight pounds."

Capo wants more people to turn away from fast food and embrace a heart healthy diet.

"This is the first step toward better health," she said.

Florence Simmons already has a healthy diet but took the class because she wants to do more.

"You always feel you do well," she said. "That's the goal, but unless you keep abreast of information you don't know."

Eat YouR Way to Better Health

To order The Survivor's Handbook and cookbook, go to www.cancerproject.org

For information on the next series of classes, contact Evelisse Capo at [AwakeTo Health@gmail.com](mailto:AwakeToHealth@gmail.com)

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