

The 7th Conference on Health Care of the Chinese in North America

Nutritional and Cultural Aspects of the Chinese Diet

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Abstract

Understanding the traditional food habits and health beliefs are important in the nutritional management of Chinese patients. Health professionals can develop more effective nutritional education programs and hospitals can provide menus that are culturally sensitive. Knowledge of dietary practice and cultural beliefs can enable practitioners to identify and encourage beneficial food practices and also counsel patients on potentially harmful food habits.

The Food and Nutrition Services Department at New York Downtown Hospital recognizes the cultural needs of the community it serves. Previously, we have provided Chinese meals only for patients on regular diets. A new revised menu, available this summer, will include traditional Chinese dishes and condiments which are modified to be low in sodium, fat, cholesterol, and sugar. Through the use of low sodium soy sauces, fresh herbs and spices, fruit purees, and low sodium broths, we are able to provide dishes that remain both authentic and flavorful for patients requiring special diets.