LESSON 4

TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR CHOICES
Lesson Plan 4: Taking Charge of Your Choices

This lesson focuses on the practical skills needed to succeed at healthy eating, including Fitting in family meals, Meal Planning, Snacking Success and Dining Decisions

Summary of needed materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wall</th>
<th>Station 1: Family meals</th>
<th>Station 2: Snacking</th>
<th>Station 3: Menu planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Fitting in Family and Shared Meals” poster</td>
<td>“Snacking Success” poster</td>
<td>“Food In A Box Café” poster</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Station 1: Family meals</th>
<th>Station 2: Snacking</th>
<th>Station 3: Menu planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Table tent with instructions</td>
<td>Table tent with instructions</td>
<td>Table tent with instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In A Box Food Photo cards (complete set)</td>
<td>In A Box Food photo cards (complete set)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Handouts</th>
<th>Station 1: Family meals</th>
<th>Station 2: Snacking</th>
<th>Station 3: Menu planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Fitting in Family and Shared meals” activity sheet</td>
<td>“Snacking Success” activity sheet</td>
<td>“Making Choices at the Food In A Box Café” activity sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Stock Your Kitchen for Healthy Snacking” activity sheet</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Not so Fast...Make a Game Plan for Eating Out” activity sheet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Taking Charge of Your Choices

Lesson Plan 4

This lesson focuses on the practical skills needed to succeed at healthy eating, including fitting in family meals, meal planning, snacking success and dining decisions.

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students will discover the importance of shared and family meals, meal and snack planning and making good choices when dining in restaurants. They will engage in practice-based activities where they use the photo cards and mock menus to make realistic and healthful choices. To extend the lesson and involve their families, students will also receive “Not so Fast ... Make a Game Plan for Eating Out” activity sheet and a “Stock Your Kitchen for Healthy Snacking” information sheet (to share with their family).

Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Describe at least three advantages of shared and family meals.

2. Identify the characteristics of healthy meals and snacks, i.e. a variety of food groups, balanced portions, and moderation in fat, sugar and sodium intake.

3. Plan at least three balanced meals and three balanced snacks.

4. Choose at least three balanced meal combinations from the hypothetical Food In-A-Box Café.

Academic Integration

Health, Science, Math, Language Arts, Critical thinking

Leader Background

The first three In-A-Box lessons provided the foundation of the MyPlate guide and the importance of dietary balance, variety and moderation. Lesson 4 focuses on the implementation of this knowledge by emphasizing the practical skills that lead to the attainment of healthy eating habits.

Shared and Family Meals

There are myriad benefits associated with shared family meals. Children and teens benefit in a variety of ways. The Nutrition Council of Oregon summarized the research in their Shared Meals Fact Sheet, which can be accessed at http://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/preventionwellness/nutrition/ They have also produced materials that accompany their Make Mealtime a Shared Time initiative.
Benefits of family meals highlighted in the fact sheet:

- Improved academic skills
- Stronger family bonds and emotional health
- Decreased risk-taking behaviors (especially among teens)
- Shared learning (e.g. social skills, vocabulary, conversational skills)
- Improved nutrition

Family meals have also been attributed to healthy weight regulation and a reduction in disordered eating. The following research looked at 17 studies involving over 180,000 children and teens and concluded the following:

“The frequency of shared family meals is significantly related to nutritional health in children and adolescents. Children and adolescents who share family meals 3 or more times per week are more likely to be in a normal weight range and have healthier dietary and eating patterns than those who share fewer than 3 family meals together. In addition, they are less likely to engage in disordered eating.”


Meal and Snack Planning

The educator/leader cannot assume that children and teens live in an environment where balanced meals are always accessible. Some youth live in food insecure homes where healthy foods are not always available, especially during the last week of the month. Other students may live in financially secure households, yet have parents or caregivers who are working long hours with little time left for shopping, cooking and meal planning. It therefore becomes important to introduce students to the skills needed to successfully plan, access or purchase, and prepare healthy meals and snacks.

Two sites that emphasize healthy eating on a budget include Food Hero from Oregon State University Extension (http://foodhero.org).
and the “Meeting your MyPlate Goals on a budget” cookbook, menus, and other resources located at http://www.choosemyplate.gov/recipes-cookbooks-and-menus.

While snacking can contribute important nutrients to a child's diet, studies show that snacks are most often a source of junk food and sweet drinks. According to research led by Barry Popkin\(^1\), kids snack more than ever with up to 27 percent of their daily calories coming from snacks. Desserts and sugar sweetened beverages are the major sources of calories from snacks. Done right, snacks can and do make a big contribution to daily nutrition. Healthy snacks should mirror meals — emphasizing nutritious foods, but in smaller quantities. A good guide is to always include a fruit or vegetable as part of any snack choice.


**Making Better Choices when Dining in Restaurants**

Because today's families eat an increasing number of meals outside of the home, children and teens will benefit if they learn to make healthful choices at restaurants. Many restaurant chains have nutrient information available on their Web sites, making it possible to plan a balanced menu beforehand. Students will be given specific criteria to use when making selections from the “Food In-A-Box Café Menu.”

**Teaching the Lesson**

1. Introduce students to the lesson by providing a brief review of the MyPlate guide that was featured in the first three In A Box lessons (e.g. the plate shows the food groups we need and the proportion that each group should make to our diet each day; the importance of moderation when choosing foods high in sugar, salt and saturated/trans fats). Ask students whether they find it easy or difficult to use these guidelines in their everyday life (allow for discussion time). Explain that this lesson will focus on the practical skills needed to develop healthy eating habits.

2. Explain to students that the first station in Lesson 4 highlights the importance of shared and family meals. Point out the advantages for kids and teens, including improved nutrition as well as enhanced social skills, communication skills and even a reduction in “risky” behavior. Ask students to list reasons why some families find it challenging to eat meals together. As part of this station, students will identify balanced meal combinations as well as list/describe examples of “faster food at home.”

3. The second station highlights snack planning. With snacks an increasing contribution to daily intake, it's important that snacks also contribute nutrients. Too often, snacks are comprised of refined grains and empty calorie foods.

4. At the third station, students will practice making choices at the hypothetical Food In-A-Box Café.

5. Explain to students that as they travel through the lesson stations, they will complete activities on their activity sheet (either at the station or when they return to their desk). Encourage students to read the information and/or follow the instructions on the instructional posters, table tents and student activity sheet for each station.
6. Below is sample dialogue that you can use when explaining the activities to the students:

- The first station in this lesson focuses on shared and family meals. In order for families to succeed with family meals, planning is in order. Refer to the station poster, table tent and your activity sheet for directions on completing this station.

- The second station highlights the choices that you make when snacking. Did you know that more than one-fourth of your daily food intake likely comes from snacking? Studies show that desserts and sugar sweetened beverages are the major sources of calories from snacks. You have the choice to turn this around and choose snacks that will provide you with both energy and nutrients. Healthy snacks should mirror meals — emphasizing nutritious foods, but in smaller quantities. A good guide is to always include a fruit or vegetable as part of any snack choice. You will practice making snack choices at this station.

- At the third station, you will visit the Food In-A-Box Café, where you will learn to make choices based on the nutrition principles learned in all of the In-A-Box lessons. The challenge is to choose meals that include at least four food groups while limiting the amount of empty calorie foods. Refer to the station poster, table tent and your activity sheet for directions on completing this station.

7. Ask students to take a copy of the “Not so Fast ... Make a Game Plan for Eating Out” activity sheet and “Stock Your Kitchen for Healthy Snacking” handout. These activity sheets can be assigned as a lesson extension, homework and/or shared with families.

Activity Sheets

Students will complete the activity sheet corresponding to each of the three stations using information from the lesson stations as well as the summary information included on the sheet.

The “Not so Fast ... Make a Game Plan for Eating Out” activity sheet and “Stock your kitchen for healthy snacking” handout are designed to extend the lesson from classroom to home.
Going Further

Resources:


2. Choose MyPlate section on recipes, cookbooks and menus - http://www.choosemyplate.gov/recipes-cookbooks-and-menuses


4. Food Hero - Where Healthy Food is Fun, Fast, Tasty and Fits Your Budget - https://www.foodhero.org/


