



# Healthy Living

## Eat More Veggies and Fruits

**Overview:** MyPlate is a visual tool we can use to help us eat a balanced and healthy diet. MyPlate shows us that we need to fill half our plate with veggies and fruits, one-quarter with lean protein, one-quarter with a grain item, and dairy. We should aim to make half our grains whole grains (see whole grain lesson for additional on this topic). Include information from the “Background: Why eat more vegetables and fruits?” sheet depending on age of youth and time restraints.

**Supplies:**

- Dairy Council Food Model Cards, sorted according to the list provided (or pictures clipped from magazines or newspapers)
- Paper plates: 4 sets of 4 plates each, labeled *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Snack* (optional: use smaller plate for *Snack*)
- Handouts: MyPlate: 1 per youth, Make Every Meal a Healthy Plate: 1 per station

**Time:** 15-20 minutes

**Activities:**

1. Ask youth to name some of their favorite foods from each food group. Take a few ideas from each food group. Then,
  - Highlight that the Protein group contains foods from animals as well as foods from plants. Protein foods include: beef, pork, chicken, fish, eggs, beans, nuts, seeds, and soy products like tofu.
  - Highlight that fruits and veggies come in a variety of colors. We should aim to eat fruits and veggies of different colors so we can benefit from the various vitamins and minerals contained in the different colors. Mention that dark green and red/orange vegetables along with beans are not eaten enough. We should include these more often!
2. Tell youth: Veggies and fruits are packed with vitamins, minerals, and fiber that keep us healthy and help us avoid some really serious diseases like cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. We need fruits and veggies to help us grow strong, have healthy skin and hair, and do our best when we play and learn.
  - Have youth gather into four groups. The goal of each group is to create three meals and one snack and that include 5 vegetables and 3 fruits for the whole day. Have youth try to make half their plates fruits and veggies. Use the “*Make Every Meal a Healthy Plate*” handout.
    - Circulate among the groups to help as needed. For younger kids, place the entrée items on the plates before they start and have them add the 5 veggies and 3 fruits.
    - Have youth circulate around the room to see what other groups chose for their meals and snacks.
3. Recap the main points of the lesson by asking students what they learned, if anything surprised them, and if they think they might eat differently after participating in the lesson.

## Background: Why eat more vegetables and fruits?

### High Nutrient Value

Vegetables and fruits are high in many nutrients, including important vitamins, minerals, fiber, and disease-preventing factors called phyto-nutrients. They are also low in fat and calories.

### Prevent Disease

Diets rich in vegetables and fruits lower your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, and some types of cancer, and also help with weight maintenance. A healthy weight helps prevent these diseases and diabetes too.

### How Much Do We Need?

Federal guidance recommends 2½ cups of vegetables and 1½ cups of fruit per day for children aged 9-13 (based on typical 1800 calories/day for this age group), and more for adults. This translates to 5 half-cup servings of vegetables and 3 half-cup servings of fruit per day. (See ChooseMyPlate.gov for more detail.)

### Most Americans don't eat enough!

Unfortunately, most Americans eat less than half the recommended amount of vegetables and fruit, and less than one in four 6-11 year olds eat even 5 vegetables and fruits a day.

### Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruits

An easy way to think about how many vegetables and fruits to eat is to fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit, with about a quarter plate each for protein and for grains, plus milk or dairy. See ChooseMyPlate.gov for more information.

### Vary Your Veggies!

Vegetables can be grouped into 5 nutrient-based categories: dark green (e.g., broccoli, spinach, leafy lettuce), red and orange (e.g., tomatoes, red pepper, carrots, winter squash, sweet potato), legumes (e.g., pinto, kidney – also in the protein group), starchy (e.g., corn, potatoes, peas), and other (e.g., tomatoes, cucumbers, green peppers, etc.). Each group is good for your health in a different way, so it's important to eat some from each group every week, especially the first three groups.

### Let children try vegetables many times, but don't push

Children may need to taste, be offered, or see others eating vegetables many times before they learn to like them. Pressuring or forcing children to eat vegetables may actually cause them to reject them more. The more variety of vegetables children are offered, the more likely they are to choose one of them.

### Focus on Fruits

Fruits are naturally sweet. Although juice is an easy way to get fruit, it lacks fiber and other benefits of whole fruit. So it's best to mostly eat whole fruit or pieces of fruit rather than juice.

### Vegetables and fruits don't have to be fresh to be healthy

Frozen, dried and canned fruits and vegetables are all nutritious, often cost less than fresh, and are easier to keep on hand. Drain canned fruit and vegetables well and throw liquid away.

### What Counts as a Half-Cup Serving?

The vegetable and fruit food cards used in this lesson are each equivalent to a standard ½ cup serving. Note that for salad or other raw leafy greens, 1 cup is considered a half-cup equivalent, and for dried fruit, ¼ cup is considered a half-cup equivalent. See ChooseMyPlate.gov for more detail.

## Materials and Supplies to Gather (continued)

### For Apply: Meal and Vegetable/Fruit Sorting for Dairy Council Food Model Cards

Sort cards into these 4 sets. At each station, place meal items on each of the 4 plates along with a pile of veg/fruits.

#### Set 1

Breakfast:		Vegetables	Fruits
	Oatmeal	1. Corn on the cob	1. Raisins
Lunch:	Peanut butter and jelly sandwich	2. Celery	2. Fruit Cocktail
Snack:	Snack Crackers Muenster Cheese	3. Green pepper	3. Orange
		4. Tossed salad	4. Grapes
Dinner:	Taco	5. Black beans	5. Grapefruit
		6. Zucchini	

#### Set 2

Breakfast:		Vegetables	Fruits
	Granola	1. Cabbage	1. Watermelon
Lunch:	Submarine sandwich	2. Green beans	2. Nectarine
Snack:	Pretzels Squeezable yogurt	3. Baby carrots	3. Apple
		4. Winter squash	4. Canned pears
Dinner:	Macaroni and cheese	5. Lettuce	5. Cantaloupe
		6. Lentils	

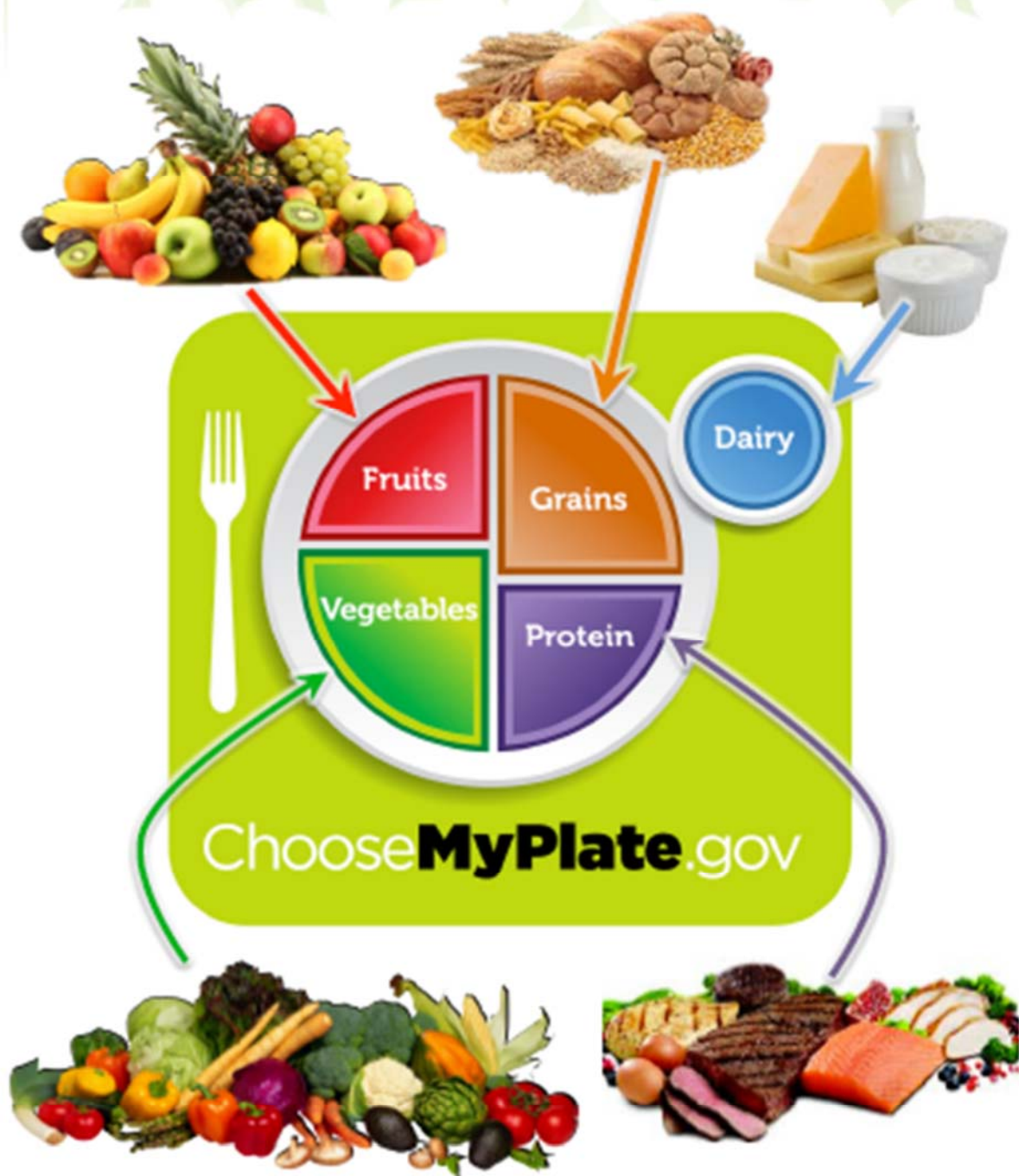
#### Set 3

Breakfast:		Vegetables	Fruits
	Bagel Cheddar cheese	1. Corn	1. Applesauce
Lunch:	Burrito	2. Baked potato	2. Strawberries
Snack:	Granola bar Walnuts	3. Tomato	3. Pineapple
		4. Spinach	4. Blueberries
Dinner:	Cheeseburger	5. Navy beans	5. Dried apricots
		6. Cauliflower	

#### Set 4

Breakfast:		Vegetables	Fruits
	Scrambled egg Whole wheat bread	1. Sweet potato	1. Canned peaches
Lunch:	Pizza	2. Broccoli	2. Mango
Snack:	Popcorn Peanuts	3. Snow peas	3. Banana
		4. Tomato juice	4. Kiwi fruit
Dinner:	Spaghetti with meatballs	5. Baked beans	5. Pear
		6. Green peas	

# MyPlate



# Try More of These!

## Dark Green Vegetables



## Red and Orange Vegetables



## Beans and Peas



# Make Every Meal a Healthy Plate!

Make a healthy plate for every meal of the day and a snack!  
Then count up all the veggies and fruits. Did you choose:  
5 vegetable cards (2½ cups) and 3 fruit cards (1½ cups) for your day?

Breakfast

What vegetables and fruits might you include for breakfast?

Lunch

What vegetables and fruits might you include for lunch?

Snack

What vegetables and fruits might you include for a snack?

Dinner

What vegetables and fruits might you include for dinner?