



is an educational program that teaches the importance of good nutrition, the science of agriculture and environmental sustainability. The exciting livestream you and your students experienced can be enhanced by using these lesson plans, as well as the other educational materials found on www.foodfarmsfuture.com. One important way to help your students make a habit of better living is to remind them to choose balanced meals rich in lean protein, vitamins and minerals based on USDA MyPlate dietary guidelines. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have found evidence linking better eating habits and physical activity with academic achievement.¹

Balanced Choices will help you reinforce the importance of making balanced food choices to help kids succeed in their mental and physical tasks. In this lesson, students learn about the role nutrient-rich protein plays in building strong muscles and how the USDA MyPlate guidelines help them create balanced, flavorful meals.

Please share this program with additional Family and Consumer Science teachers and other teachers in your school, as well as your food service director, school nurse, coaches, counselors and health teachers. Although the materials are copyrighted, you may make as many copies as you need for your students.



BALANCED CHOICES

Target Audience

Students in middle and high school Family and Consumer Science classes

Objectives

- Engage students in establishing lifelong health goals based on MyPlate nutritional guidelines
- Explore how pork farmers practice sustainability and animal care

How to Use This Program

Make copies of this teacher's guide and the activity sheet. Prepare the materials for the activity in advance.

Purpose of Activity

Review, Identify Details, Apply Skills

21st Century Skills

Critical Thinking

Cognitive Level

Strategic and Extended Thinking

Class Time

45 minutes

Materials

- Internet access
- Paper
- Pencil or pen

Teaching *Balanced Choices*

Ask students to share their favorite activities that help them stay at the top of their game physically and mentally. Point out that it's important for *everyone* to exercise, get enough sleep and make balanced food choices, especially during the teen years when a lot of physical growth takes place. That's exactly when teens start to become so busy that they may skip meals or make less nutritious choices on the run instead of supporting their bodies with the nutrition they need. Help them know they can make tasty, nutritious choices, even on the busiest of days.

Divide students into small groups to discuss and write down some of their typical meals over the past week, as well as some of their favorite food choices. Which foods do they rely on for their protein, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients? As groups are compiling their lists, distribute the activity sheet and direct them to read Part 1 about the USDA MyPlate guidelines. Ask them to evaluate their choices in relation to MyPlate, keeping in mind that protein is an important food group as part of creating a balanced meal. Now have groups share their results aloud. How balanced do they think their choices were?

Next, have students complete Part 2 of the sheet, which asks them to think about the protein portion of their meal, and Part 3, which completes the meal planning strategy by having them create a balanced meal.

Finally, ask students to "post their plate" in the style of a social media post by describing their meal in a way that encourages others to try it.

Answers, Part 2: 1. b; 2. d; 3. e; 4. c; 5. a; 6. f. Explain to students that while many foods outside the protein group may also contain protein, the foods within the actual protein group are grouped together because of their protein content. It is important to eat foods from all five food groups for balanced meals.

Resources

- Health and Academic Achievement: cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/health-academic-achievement.pdf
- "Teens, Your Brain Needs Real Food": health.usnews.com/health-news/health-wellness/articles/2016-01-05/teens-your-brain-needs-real-food
- MyPlate: choosemyplate.gov



¹ cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/health-academic-achievement.pdf



BALANCED CHOICES

Part 1: Check Your Choices

MyPlate is a guide provided by the USDA and based on the dietary guidelines for following a balanced diet that includes the essential elements needed for good nutrition. This includes choosing food and beverages from all five food groups to get the nutrients you need: fruits, vegetables, grains, protein and dairy. To build a balanced eating style, MyPlate suggests: Make half your plate fruits and vegetables, make half of your grains whole grains, go for low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt and vary your proteins. Also, choose options with less saturated fat, sodium and added sugars. The total amount you need each day depends

on your age, gender and level of physical activity. Recommended daily amounts for kids ages nine to 18 include the following ranges:

- Fruits – 1½ to 2 cups
- Vegetables – 2 to 3 cups
- Grains – 5- to 8-ounce equivalents
- Protein – 5- to 6½-ounce equivalents
- Dairy – 3 cups

Working with your group, identify examples of typical meals you each had recently. How did the meals measure up to MyPlate standards? Check out choosemyplate.gov for more detail.

Part 2: Protein Power

Protein is present throughout your entire body. It provides the building blocks for bones, muscles, cartilage, blood and skin, as well as enzymes, hormones and vitamins. Protein also provides the body with calories." As part of a balanced diet and regular exercise, protein and vitamins work together to make your body strong. This makes choosing the protein portion of your MyPlate meal extremely important.

Protein can be found in a wide variety of foods – even foods that belong to other food groups – but the amount of protein can vary. Look at common portions of each food below. Match it to the amount of protein you think it provides.

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 1 _____ 3 ounces of pork loin (3 oz-equivalent) | a 11 grams |
| 2 _____ 1 cup of chopped broccoli (cooked or raw) | b 24 grams |
| 3 _____ 1/2 cup of cooked black beans (2 oz-equivalent) | c 10 grams |
| 4 _____ 8 ounces of lowfat milk | d 2 grams |
| 5 _____ 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (2 oz-equivalent) | e 8 grams |
| 6 _____ 1 egg | f 6.24 grams |

Did you know pork is a nutrient-rich and versatile protein? It provides a perfect foundation for a MyPlate meal because it goes well with other food groups, it's affordable and is easy to prepare.

Part 3: Get Social

Now, plan a lean meal following the MyPlate guidelines. On the back of this sheet or on a separate piece of paper, draw and style your meal in the manner of a social media post and describe it in a way that encourages others to try it. Use your most persuasive wording to attract readers to your choice.

*choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/WhatIsMyPlate

**choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/protein-foods/protein-foods-nutrients-health



Did you know?
MyPlate has a **Start Simple with MyPlate** mobile app to set daily goals within the MyPlate food groups and earn fun badges. Download it today from the App Store or Google Play. Use your food-group knowledge to plan a meal for your family! Check out the recipes at yummly.com/page/pork to help you plan your meal.



Start simple
with MyPlate

Get Started

USDA MyPlate
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

