

HEALTHY EATING BASICS

Introduction

This lesson introduces an older adult audience to basic concepts that they can use to maintain a healthy diet. The discussion guide provides suggested questions to draw out participants' existing knowledge as well as information you can offer in response to each question.

Preparation

1. Review the topic.

- Start with the key concepts and discussion guide. The discussion guide provides suggested questions to draw out participants' existing knowledge as well as information you can offer in response to each question.
- Consider your participant demographics and potential interests, and conduct any additional research that may be necessary to prepare for specific questions or improve your own understanding of key concepts (see "Program Guide" for suggested resources).

2. Plan your lesson structure.

- Determine whether time and resources allow for a food-based activity or whether you will use an alternate activity. This lesson includes one alternate activity, and additional activity suggestions are available in the "Program Guide."
- See "Exercise for Health" lesson for ways to incorporate physical activity into the lesson, and plan to ask participants to share their favorite ways to exercise.
- Prepare a rough timeline of your lesson and a plan to integrate discussion with the activity. Depending on available time and participant interests, you can integrate discussion topics into an activity or use discussion time to open or close the lesson.

3. **Plan how to administer pre-test** (as well as post-test if this is the final session). See "Program Guide" for details.

4. Prepare materials.

- Review the appropriate activity and prepare any necessary materials.
- Choose and print handouts, recipes and pre-tests.

Suggested Recipes

Recipes for this lesson should promote balanced meals by using healthy foods from as many food groups as possible.

- Build a Bowl of Beans and Grains
- Rainbow Chili

Suggested Handouts

- "Healthy Meals with MyPlate"

Key Concepts

Healthy eating is an important aspect of preventing many diseases and maintaining strength as you age. Older adults can build healthy habits by focusing on eating balanced meals, using the MyPlate model or other strategies participants may share with each other. Be prepared to adapt the lesson based on participants' interests in particular food groups/nutrients or questions about healthy eating strategies, or use questions to shape future lesson plans.



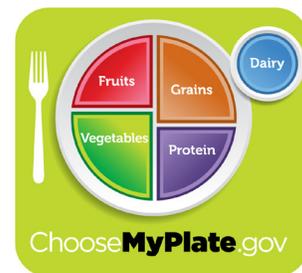
Discussion Guide

What do you know about healthy eating? Why is it important?

- Healthy eating helps prevent diet-related diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke and cancer.
- Healthy eating helps you manage your weight. Being overweight can put you at risk for diet-related diseases, and some older adults are also at risk of being dangerously underweight.

What are some strategies you use to eat healthy meals? Do you think about food groups or nutrients? Is anyone familiar with MyPlate, or do you remember the food pyramid?

- An easy way to make sure you get all the nutrients you need is to use the MyPlate method to plan your meals using food groups. MyPlate has replaced the food pyramid because it provides an easy way to visualize the different foods you should be eating at each meal.
- The food groups used by the USDA for MyPlate are fruits, vegetables, grains, protein and dairy. (Consider passing out the MyPlate for Older Adults handout, or showing a basic visual of MyPlate.)
- Use the MyPlate method to plan a healthy meal by:
 - Making half your plate fruits and vegetables—try to eat a variety of different colored vegetables, especially dark leafy greens and bright orange and yellow vegetables.
 - Adding whole grains to 1/4 of your plate.
 - Filling the last 1/4 with lean proteins like poultry, fish and beans.
 - Adding a cup of dairy or water (fruit juice should be limited because it has a high sugar content and lacks the fiber in whole fruit that helps moderate the impact of sugar).



Does anyone pay attention to calories? Do you think calories are important? How do you use calorie information?

- The basic formula for maintaining a healthy weight is to balance the amount of calories (energy) you take in with the energy you use during the day, through normal activities and exercise.
- Caloric needs vary by age and gender as well as physical activity level. Most adults need fewer calories as they age.
- What other habits can you strengthen to support your healthy diet? What strategies do you use to stay hydrated and fit?
- Drinking water throughout the day (not just when you feel thirsty) and making physical activity part of your routine are important complements to healthy eating habits.

Do your nutrient needs change as you age? What are some strategies for getting nutrient-rich food?

Although eating a balanced diet will generally get you all the nutrients you need, older adults need to make sure they get enough of some particular nutrients:

- Vitamin D and calcium are important for bone health—make sure you are eating enough dairy or other calcium-rich foods.
- Fiber-rich foods help you stay regular, reduce your risk of heart disease and balance blood sugar; make sure you eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and beans.
- Vitamin B12 is in lean meats and some seafood.
- Increasing the amount of potassium you consume along with reducing sodium intake can decrease your risk of high blood pressure. Milk, yogurt and various fruits and vegetables can help you get more potassium.



Suggested Activities

If you have access to basic ingredients and supplies, we recommend planning the lesson around a cooking demonstration or activity that will show participants concrete skills that apply the lesson concepts. If limited resources or time make a food-based activity impossible, use the alternate activity or any of the other suggested activities in the “Program Guide.”

A. Food-Based Activity: Whole-Grain Sandwiches

Without any cooking you can still make a balanced meal out of a sandwich with whole-grain bread, healthy proteins, and greens and sliced vegetables.

Discussion points to address while preparing food (see discussion guide as well):

- Do you like to buy whole-grain bread or tortillas? You can make sure foods you buy are whole-grain by making sure whole wheat is listed as the first ingredient. 100% whole-grain products shouldn't have any other flours listed.
- The MyPlate method recommends making about 1/4 your meal whole grains; this could be two pieces of bread or one tortilla.
- What are some of your favorite healthy proteins? Tuna and salmon have heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids, and beans are another great protein source that are full of fiber. Turkey and chicken are also great lean protein sources.
- The MyPlate method includes making 1/4 of your plate proteins, which could be half a cup of beans or 3 ounces of fish.
- What are different greens and vegetables you could use for sandwiches? In addition to using fresh vegetables, you can also grill or roast vegetables to use for sandwiches and other dishes.
- MyPlate meals should be 1/2 vegetables: 2-4 cups raw greens or 1-2 cups other chopped vegetables

Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plates for each participant • Optional: cutting boards and knives • Table knives, optional forks for mashing chickpeas
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start by deciding whether the activity will be a demonstration or will involve participation. If participants will be preparing food themselves, decide whether they will work alone or in groups. • Review “Program Guide” for tips on leading a cooking demo or guiding participants through a recipe. • Review ingredients and make substitutions as necessary. • Modify recipe as necessary, and print copies for participants to take home. • Chop or slice vegetables, unless you have space and equipment to let participants cut vegetables.
Ingredients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole-grain bread or tortillas • Canned tuna, sliced turkey or canned chickpeas • Greens (lettuce, arugula or spinach) • Assorted vegetables: tomatoes, onions, peppers, cucumbers, pickles, avocado, etc.
Directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sandwiches or wraps with whole grain bread/tortillas and tuna, turkey and/or mashed chickpeas (if a food processor is available you could also demonstrate how to make hummus). • Add (or invite participants to add) greens/vegetables.

B. Alternate Activity: Healthy Eating Jeopardy

Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeopardy board and answer key
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how to divide participants into groups • Decide whether to keep track of money or just play to answer questions (see rules in Appendix) • Prepare jeopardy board so that all participants can see; try projecting image onto a screen and covering each answer with paper taped to the screen, or printing/writing out categories and answers on a large poster or cardboard (and also covering answers with blank paper)
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide participants into groups and share the rules of the game (see Appendix) • Play until all questions have been answered

Complete Meal Sandwich

Liven up the same old sandwich with new, healthier ingredients! Without any cooking you can still make a balanced meal out of a sandwich or wrap using whole grains, healthy proteins, and greens and sliced vegetables.

INGREDIENTS

- Whole-grain bread or tortillas
- Canned tuna, sliced turkey or canned chickpeas
- Optional (if making hummus): garlic, lemon juice, salt and tahini
- Greens (lettuce, spinach or arugula)
- Assorted fresh vegetables: tomatoes, onions, peppers, cucumbers, avocado, etc.
- Optional garnishes: pickles, roasted red peppers, olives, etc.

DIRECTIONS

1. If using chickpeas, mash with a fork or in a food processor. Add minced garlic, lemon juice, a pinch of salt and (optional) tahini to taste.
2. Slice vegetables into rounds or strips and tear or cut greens.
3. Combine all ingredients to assemble sandwich or wrap.

