

# **Lesson Plans for The Best Me / El Mejor YO Choosing Healthy Food and Drink for My Plate**

## **Hop-A-Lot's First Steps to Fitness**

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**Goal:** To understand what contributes to creating a diet that builds healthy children and families by using USDA dietary guidelines for MyPlate.

### **Objectives for Parent:**

1. To understand the importance of variety & balance in meals.
2. To increase consumption of fruits and vegetables.
3. To expand my awareness of the variety of protein sources.
4. To build strong bones and teeth that will last a lifetime.
5. To understand the importance of fiber in the diet.
6. To see how smart choices become healthy habits.

### **Objectives for Child:**

1. To learn to make healthy food and drink choices.

### **Lesson Plan Set-up:**

There are many ways to use **The Best Me / El Mejor YO**. It is a teaching tool for both the parent and the child, so depending upon the situation, it will be used differently.

- Small groups of mothers (and/or fathers) can be directed through the book by a staff member following the lesson plan.

- Use one objective each time the group gathers. There is a lot of background information tied to each book page and many related activities. You may find some points repeated.
- Use what works. Parents need to see how easy and “do-able” this is.
- You may begin by allowing each parent to choose an entry in the **Parents’ Corner** and share what it means to them. It is very interesting to see how this varies within groups and what the mothers and fathers can learn from one another.
- Each numbered objective in the lesson plan will be followed by the related page(s) in the book. All illustrations and verse information are the same for both Spanish and English sides.
- All illustrations are teaching tools. They will support and expand the information provided in the verse and **Parents’ Corner**.
- Have parents read the book to their children and talk about the topics being covered. Ask parents to share their children’s responses with the group.

## **Activities to Accomplish Objectives:**

### **1. (PAGES 1 & 2) To understand that a balanced meal contains a variety of foods from all food groups.**

#### **1. A. What are the food groups?**

- Have parent(s) identify the food groups. It can be very interesting to see what they consider them to be.
  1. Grains: Make at least half your grains whole each day.
  2. Vegetables: serve a variety of vegetables each day.
  3. Fruits: Eat the whole fruit over drinking its juice.
  4. Milk: Many other foods also contain calcium.
  5. Protein: Meat, fish, beans & nuts are protein-rich.  
The above 5 groups appear on The USDA’s MyPlate.
  6. Fats, sugars and salts (usually found in packaged snack, party or dessert foods) are to be eaten in moderation. Trans-fats are to be avoided.

- If appropriate use the [www.choosemyplate.com](http://www.choosemyplate.com) or [www.the-nutritionsource.org](http://www.the-nutritionsource.org) websites for MyPlate / food group info.

**1. B. Have participants make a list of foods they serve or eat that belong in each group.**

- Look for variety in each food group.
- Have a wide variety of pictures of foods from all food groups and have the participants organize them into the appropriate groups.
- Each food group will be covered in more detail further on in the lesson plans.

**1. C. No one food meets the needs of all parts of the body.**

- Young children have the same nutritional needs as adults. We all need a variety of foods from all food groups. Only quantities will differ....children's stomachs are 1/3 the size of adults.
- Toddlers and preschoolers grow more slowly than infants. Growth rates and activity levels will cause appetites to vary, sometimes on a daily basis. Serving a variety of foods from all food groups is more important than the quantity of food eaten.
- Visit [www.littlepeoplesplates.co.uk](http://www.littlepeoplesplates.co.uk) for guidance and tips on feeding infants and toddlers.

**1. D. Parents are responsible for what, when and where their children eat.**

- Parents must maintain control over mealtimes.
- Serve nutritious (not "party food") snacks as well as meals.
- Limit foods from boxes, cans, packages and restaurants.
- Meals prepared at home are healthier because they:
  1. contain more fruits and vegetables
  2. have less salt, fat and sugar
  3. are less likely to be fried
  4. are served with milk or water, not juices or sodas.
- Every food group doesn't have to be included in every meal, but try to use at least three of them. Include all of them over the day.

- Have parents give examples for each meal and one snack and identify which groups are being served. Examples:
  1. Breakfast = whole grain cereal, low-fat milk, banana & OJ  
 (grains/fiber, dairy/calcium/protein, fruits)  
 = low-fat yogurt, fruit, whole grain toast, OJ  
 (dairy/calcium/protein, fruits, grains/fiber)  
 = eggs, whole grain toast, OJ  
 (protein, grains/fiber, fruits)
  2. Lunch = whole grain bread with peanut butter, banana  
 and jelly sandwich with carrot sticks on side  
 (grains, protein, fruits, vegetables)  
 = corn tortilla quesadillas with low-fat cheese,  
 onions & salsa, with sliced fruits or veggies  
 (grains, dairy/calcium/protein, vegetables, fruits)
  3. Dinner = baked chicken, salad, brown rice & broccoli, milk  
 (protein, vegetables, grains, low-fat dairy)  
 = black beans over brown rice with poached eggs  
 served with sliced avocado and tomatoes  
 (protein, grains/fiber, fruit)
  4. Snack = cut veggies with bean dip  
 (vegetable & fiber/protein)  
 = apple slices dipped in low-fat yogurt  
 (fruit & dairy/calcium/protein)  
 = whole grain crackers with low-fat cheese slices  
 and fruit (grains/fiber, dairy/calcium, fruit)
- Serve regular scheduled meals and snacks. When children know they can depend on a feeding schedule, they won't need to over-eat or hoard food. These behaviors can lead to emotional problems and weight issues.
- Don't let a child "graze", continually snacking through the day. This interferes with mealtimes and appetite regulation.
- Make sure at least one meal a day is a family meal. Eating together provides nourishment and nurturance.

- Read **Family Meals**, available at [www.fitness4kidz.com](http://www.fitness4kidz.com) .
- Resist eating in front of the TV. It interferes with conversations and leads to mindless eating where we don't pay attention to our "full" signals. TV ads also encourage us (especially children) to eat less-than-healthy foods. Meal time is family time.
- Limit junk food in the house. If its not there it can't be eaten.
- Serve age-appropriate portions. Let family members ask for more. Don't insist on clean plates.

### **1. E. Children decide whether and what to eat.**

- Variety is a key component in healthy diets. There is no one food that meets the needs of all parts of the body.
- Getting children to try new foods can be challenging.
- Children have a natural aversion to many new foods.
- Encouraging a child to eat a variety of foods must start early.
- Studies are showing that the diets of breastfeeding mothers can influence the food preferences of their children. Mothers who ate a wide variety of healthy foods (especially fruits and vegetables) during pregnancy and breastfeeding can have children open to more food tastes.
- Eating preferences can be established as early as 3-5 years of age and influence food and drink choices made over a lifetime.
- It takes repeated exposure to many foods to get a child to accept them, but variety is a key to healthy eating.
- Some tips to get children to eat new foods:
  1. Serve new foods in small bite-sizes, at the right temperature, texture (easily chewed & swallowed) and not too dry.
  2. When feeding infants, start with pureed vegetables to introduce new flavors in a gradual process.
  3. Always serve new foods with foods the child already likes.
  4. Expect your child to "play" with a new food, as he becomes familiar with it. Have fun with this learning experience.

5. Providing dips for fruits and vegetables makes eating them more fun while building small muscle and hand/eye coordination.
6. Serve fruits and vegetables first while children are most hungry.
7. Never force a child to eat. Patience works better than pressure and avoids unpleasant mealtimes.
8. Sometimes a food must be presented 10-20 times before it is tried. Don't give up!
10. Children are more open to new foods they have helped choose or prepare.
11. A child will be more receptive to a food that he watches you enjoy.

- Have parents share what techniques they have used to get their children to try new foods.
- A child's appetite can vary widely during early childhood. It can be influenced by growth spurts, activity levels, health issues, other children and other activities occurring during mealtimes.
- Your child is the best judge of how much needs to be eaten.
- If a child says he is done, excuse him and don't feed him again until the next scheduled snack or meal, except for water.
- Forcing a child to eat interferes with her ability to self-regulate food consumption, and creates the possibility of future weight problems. It also leads to "food fights" no one wins.
- A child will occasionally get on a food "jag" insisting on the same food every meal. Serve it occasionally, but remember, you are in charge of the menu, not your child.
- Have parents suggest dips to increase fruits and veggies eaten.

#### **1. F. A child learns about eating by watching his parents.**

- What is your attitude about mealtime? Is it an opportunity to be creative and pro-active in your family's health or a chore that is to be completed as quickly as possible with as little thought as possible?
- What are your participants' strengths and weaknesses in the kitchen? How can they help each other?

- What attitudes and expectations are you teaching your child about eating? (That it doesn't matter what or how much you eat, or that it matters too much?)
- Why is this important? The first example can lead to a dangerous lack of understanding about the connections between diet and health. The second one can become an obsession about getting too much or too little that results in eating disorders/emotional problems and weight issues.
- What behaviors do you model...**do you eat like a child?** Have parents answer these questions:
  1. Do I eat the same things every day? Am I afraid of new foods?
  2. Do I think I don't like something because I didn't like it as a child? Vegetables, especially, fall into this category.
  3. Do I "graze", constantly snacking or nursing a soda, energy drink, cup of coffee?
  4. Do I get stuck eating kid-friendly foods because they're convenient (and I like them)?
  5. Am I enticed by labels (low-fat, Oprah or Starbucks) just like a child is by Sponge Bob, Captain Crunch or the golden arches?
  6. Do I clean my plate even if I am full? Instead of listening to my own internal cues, do I eat until my plate is clean, the TV program is over or I've had dessert?
  7. Do I sit at the table and eat, walk around with food or eat over the sink?
  8. Do I keep mealtimes pleasant by avoiding "hot button" topics and include all family members in conversations?
- Go to [www.realage.com](http://www.realage.com) for a wealth of information about your current health status, recipes and health information.
- Including a young child in family meals means he/she:
  - a. eats what you eat
  - b. behaves appropriately for his age
  - c. is included in the conversation, but doesn't dominate it.

- d. is allowed to determine when he/she is full (not the plate)
  - e. food is not used as a bribe, punishment or reward.
- Sharing nutritious meals gives parents a sense of satisfaction about their family's physical, mental and emotional health.

**2. (Page 3) I understand the importance of fruits & vegetables.**

- All health professionals agree that everyone should increase the amounts of fruits and vegetables eaten each day.
- MyPlate guidelines show half the plate is fruits and vegetables.
- It is recommended we eat 5-9 servings a day. **What is a serving?**
  - a. A good “rule of thumb” is to serve a tablespoon of food for each year of age (2-5 years).
  - b. There is some confusion over food serving sizes. Google “picture perfect portion sizes” for many resources to help visualize serving sizes.
  - c. Go to [www.nccc.org/Nutrition/nutrition.pres.html](http://www.nccc.org/Nutrition/nutrition.pres.html) for a “Feeding Guide for the Preschool Child” that will outline the food group, suggested daily servings and suggested serving sizes.
  - d. Read packaged food labels carefully. Serving sizes are much smaller than most people think. Small packages are usually more than one serving.
- Have participants list the fruits and vegetables they eat.
- Have them organize which fruits and vegetables could be served for:
  1. breakfast
  2. lunch
  3. snacks
  4. dinner
  5. dessert
- Which fruits and vegetables do their children enjoy? Avoid?
- Do your children's food preferences mirror your's?

- It is natural to not like every food presented. Just remember that repeated introductions to new foods will build a child's ability to accept them. Don't give up...be patient.

**2. B. Introducing new fruits and vegetables.** These suggestions apply to any new food.

- Make sure fruits and vegetables are offered in sizes and shapes to prevent choking. Don't serve foods too hot or too cold.
- Have fruits and vegetables cleaned, handy and ready to eat. Keep them on the counter or easily reached in the refrigerator. Try putting healthy snacks in zip-lock bags to take outside.
- Children prefer crunchy vegetables. Don't overcook them, but steam them to maintain their nutrients and crunchiness.
- Serve new foods first, when child is most hungry.
- Make up funny names for veggies...mini-trees=broccoli, butterballs=Brussels sprouts, walking sticks=carrots/celery, "who's the Super Salad Eater"?
- Offer new fruits and vegetables with ones the child already likes.
- Try a "no thank you bite" when child refuses a food. Enough small bites often results in child "suddenly" liking it.
- Let a preschooler serve him/herself. S/he will feel more control over the new food and gain new skills.
- Involve the child in choosing and preparing the new foods.
- Know your child will "play" with the new food as s/he learns about it. Enjoy this process.

**1. Add new fruits and vegetables to foods already accepted:**

- Dice or blend cooked carrots, onions, squash, mushrooms, peppers or other desired vegetables into spaghetti, lasagna, pizza sauce, soups, meatballs, meatloaf, veggie patties and chili.
- Blend new fruits with banana and low-fat milk, 100% fruit juice or ice cubes for a breakfast or snack smoothie. Freeze leftovers in popsicle makers for desserts or snacks.
- Add sliced fresh fruit (bananas, berries, apples) to whole grain

- pancakes or toppings for whole wheat French Toast.
- Make a fruit salad and dress with low-fat yogurt.
  - Add sliced fruit to pancakes, waffles, oatmeal, breakfast cereals and/or peanut-butter sandwiches.
  - Add chopped vegetables to grilled low-fat cheese sandwiches, burritos and quesadillas.
  - Make slaws with a variety of shredded vegetables and a low-fat mayo or dressing.
  - Add cooked carrots, cauliflower and/or roasted garlic before mashing potatoes. Use finely chopped parsley and/or green onions and a little low-fat cheese to baked potatoes.
  - Stir in dried cranberries or raisins to brown rice before serving.

## 2. Talk to your child about fruits and vegetables.

- Explore their different sizes, shapes, colors, textures, smells and flavors. Blindfold a child and have them guess the fruit or veggie by shape, smell, taste.
  - Read ***Vegetable Soup / The Fruit Bowl*** found at [www.fitness4kidz.com](http://www.fitness4kidz.com) that shows kids the connections between what they eat and how they look, feel and perform.
  - Play the ***Farmers' Market*** game (also found at the above website). Kids will see how fruits and vegetables are grown and why they are good for us.
  - Children are more likely to try a new food they helped select or prepare.
1. Take your children shopping for fruits and vegetables. Visit the produce department or local farmers' markets and let your child select a new fruit or vegetable.
  2. Talk to the people in the store or markets who can tell you what's in season and give you preparation tips. Involve your child in the conversation.
  3. Let your child "help" prepare the new fruits and vegetables. They can wash, peel, shred lettuce, snap beans, arrange on platters or perform other safe jobs.
  4. Check out ***C is for Cooking: Recipes from the Street*** from the Sesame Street Workshop for many ideas to

involve kids in the kitchen.

5. Grow a garden. Keep it simple: tomatoes can be grown in a pot (or upside down), radishes grow quickly for faster results, squash and cucumbers are prolific (if you have the space) and don't take much care. Studies confirm that children, 2-5 years old, who have gardens at home or school, eat more fresh fruits and vegetables.
6. Google "green vegetables kids will eat" for some great ideas and additional websites.

## **2. C. Carefully wash all fruits and vegetables.**

- It is very important to wash all fruits and vegetables, especially those eaten by children with less developed immune systems.
- You want to remove pesticides, waxes, human perspiration, oils, dirt and exhaust fumes from transportation.
- Do not use dishwashing detergent or bleach.
- Your market has many products for this purpose, such as *Nature Clean's Fruit & Veggie Wash & Spray*.
- Check [www.cfsan.fda.gov](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov) for food safety tips or call 1-888-SAFEFOOD for their colorful brochure, Safe Handling of Raw Produce and Fresh Squeezed Juices.
- Food scrub brushes can be used on many fruits and vegetables that you don't want to peel.
- The 12 most contaminated fruits and veggies:
  - a. Peaches and nectarines
  - b. Strawberries and cherries
  - c. Apples and pears
  - d. Imported grapes
  - e. Spinach and lettuce
  - f. Sweet bell peppers, celery and potatoes.
- The 12 least contaminated fruits and veggies:
  - a. Sweet corn and peas
  - b. Onions and asparagus
  - c. Cabbage and broccoli
  - d. Mangoes and kiwi
  - e. Avocadoes and eggplant
  - f. Pineapples and bananas.

- Make sure you check the organic section of your store. Often times the prices will be competitive (and sometimes cheaper).

## 2. D. **The health benefits of fruits and vegetables affect all parts of our bodies.**

- Fruits and vegetables are low in salt, fats, calories and are cholesterol-free. Only animal products (meats, dairy, poultry, eggs and fish) contain cholesterol.
- Go for color! Brightly colored fruits and vegetables are nutrient-rich.
- Vegetables and fruits provide:
  - a. energy
  - b. fiber for digestion and elimination
  - c. vitamins A and C and other nutrients that fight disease and infections (builds our immune systems)
  - d. protection for our eyes and skin
  - e. nutrients to heal and repair the body
  - f. nutrients to fight aging.
- Google ***fruits and vegetables nutrition*** for a wealth of websites with nutrition charts and information.

## 2. E. It is important to not substitute juices for the whole fruit or vegetable. Important nutrients and fiber are compromised or lost.

- Monitor fruit juice consumption.
- Drinking juice is a fairly recent addition to people's diets.
- Never put a child to bed with fruit juice (or milk) in a bottle.
- Health professionals recommend that children under 6 drink no more than 4 to 6 ounces of fruit juice a day.
- When drinking fruit juices, make sure they are 100% fruit without added sugars.
- Try adding water to juices to cut the sugar and calories.
- A good "rule of thumb" when juicing fruit, is to not drink any more juice than whole fruit you would eat. Otherwise, you're getting too much fruit sugar.

- Fruit juices concentrate the fruit's sugars and contain more calories than sodas!
- Check sodium (salt) levels in vegetable juices.
- Over-consumption of fruit juices contributes to weight gain and a preference for sweeter foods.
- Fruit Drinks provide added sugars with few nutrients and little fiber. Avoid them as much as possible.

### **3. A. (Page 4) I will expand my awareness of protein sources.**

#### **1. Why is protein important?**

- Protein provides the building blocks for a young child's entire body.
- The body does not make or store protein. It is important to eat protein every day.
- Our body needs protein for:
  1. growth and energy
  2. repair of muscles, bones, hair, skin and nails
  3. strength and flexibility
  4. transportation of nutrients (circulation)
  5. digestion and appetite control
  6. antibodies to fight infections and disease
  7. brain development
- It is important that pregnant women eat enough protein. The mother's iron-rich, red blood cells are necessary for the developing baby and help prevent low birth weight babies.
- Too much protein results in:
  - a. kidney and liver damage
  - b. weakness and dizziness
  - c. bad breath
  - d. risk of increased LDL (bad) cholesterol levels
  - e. weight gain from too much saturated fat
  - f. dehydration
  - g. risk of bone loss, diabetes, stroke & heart disease.

- Too little protein results in:
  - a. muscle breakdown
  - b. lack of energy
  - c. poor digestion
  - d. hair loss
  - e. distended stomach
  - f. liver damage.

## 2. What is the right amount of protein?

- This is determined by age, weight and activity levels.
- Google **protein needs** for graphs and charts for all age groups, sexes and activity levels.
- A helpful visual for protein serving sizes is to keep them the same size as the palm of the hand. Remember the tablespoon rule for each year of age (2-5).
- Refer to **2.A.c.** for suggested serving sizes.

## 3. B. Protein Sources

- A balanced diet uses protein from a variety of sources.
- Look at the illustration opposite page 4. Everything pictured on that page is a protein source. Ask participants to identify the different protein sources.
- What proteins do the participants eat?
- Have participants share how they serve the proteins they eat.
- How to serve animal protein to reduce the saturated fats:
  - a. remove skin from poultry
  - b. buy reduced fat ground round
  - c. rinse cooked fattier ground round in hot water
  - d. remove fatty deposits from meats and fish before cooking
  - e. oven roast, grill, saute or bake, limit all deep-fried foods
  - f. poach meats in low-sodium vegetable broth
  - g. limit processed meats. They are high in fats, salt & additives.
- Fish is a great source of protein.
- Fish also has healthy oils (omega-3 fatty acids) that are

- important for brain development.
- Pregnant women and children under 6 should eat fish no more than 2 times a week.
- Some fish are also a source of mercury which can cause brain and kidney damage.
- Types of fish pregnant women and young children should avoid:
  1. swordfish and marlin
  2. tilefish and bluefish
  3. shark and king mackerel
  4. grouper and sea bass
  5. tuna (Ahi, canned Albacore and Yellowfin)
- Make sure freshly caught fish are from mercury and pollution-free waters.
- Fish with the lowest mercury levels:
  1. anchovies and sardines
  2. catfish and perch
  3. clams and shrimp
  4. salmon (especially canned)
  5. tilapia and trout
  6. light tuna
- What non-meat protein dishes do the participants enjoy?
- Have them share with the group.
- **Some suggestions for meat-free meals:**
  1. use tofu crumbles instead of ground round in spaghetti sauces, lasagna, chili, burritos and tacos
  2. black bean or veggie burgers
  3. oven baked falafels with guacamole in whole wheat pitas
  4. black beans over brown rice topped with a poached egg
  5. veggie pizzas, omelets, enchiladas, tamales, lasagnas
  6. bean and/or veggie burritos with enchilada sauce
  7. oven baked eggplant parmesan or rollatini
  8. whole grain pasta primavera or veggie pasta salads
  9. tofu stir fries.

- Using the participants' ideas, develop some recipes for meatless meals. Google ***meatless meals/recipes*** for a wealth of ideas.

### **3. C. Protein snacks**

- Have participants share protein snack ideas.
- Some suggestions:
  1. peanut butter on apple slices or celery sticks
  2. veggies slices dipped in hummus or bean dip
  3. low-fat cheese slices on whole wheat crackers
  4. fruit dipped in low-fat yogurt
  5. hard boiled egg and whole wheat toast or crackers
  6. low-fat cheese in corn tortilla quesadillas
  7. baked chicken slices dipped in guacamole
  8. light canned tuna on whole wheat crackers or pitas with low-fat cheese

### **4. A. (Page 5) Building strong bones, teeth, heart, muscles and nerves to last a lifetime.**

- Childhood and adolescence are the most important bone-building times of our lives.
- Osteoporosis that can occur as we age, begins with missed opportunities in childhood.
- Calcium is a mineral that builds strong bones, teeth, heart, muscles and nerves.
- The body can't produce calcium. It must come through the diet or supplements.
- The vast majority of our calcium we get through dairy products.
- It is important that low-fat milk is consumed through the teenage years.
- Strong bones, teeth and hearts need more than just calcium.
- Look at the illustration opposite page 5. Have participants identify the 5 "ingredients" for strong bones, teeth & hearts.
- How many sources do they use for calcium?

#### 4. B. The five ingredients for strong bones, teeth & hearts:

1. **Activity:** Our bodies need weight-bearing exercise to build strong bones, muscles and healthy hearts. Walking, jumping, running, weight training (lifting, pulling and pushing of childhood), climbing and dancing are important activities we must continue to enjoy through life.
2. **Vitamin D** helps bones absorb calcium. Sources:
  - the sun is the best and cheapest form of this vitamin. 10-20 minutes of sun exposure without sunscreen is important. However, winter sun north of a line drawn from Atlanta to San Francisco contains little to no Vitamin D.
  - cold-water fish (light tuna, salmon, trout, sardines),
  - fortified foods (milk, cereal and orange juice) and
  - supplements (most doctors recommend Vitamin D3).

Remember:

  - Melanin levels (pigments) in the skin determine vitamin D needs.
  - Talk with your doctor about your Vitamin D needs, especially during pregnancy and breastfeeding.
3. **Magnesium** regulates calcium absorption into bones. It is found in most foods except refined, processed (think packaged/snack/party) food products.
4. **Vitamin K** increases bone mineral density making them stronger and less likely to break. Sources are:
  - leafy greens
  - meats
  - fermented foods found in soy-based foods.
5. **Calcium** builds strong bones, teeth, heart, muscles and nerves. Our bones not only support us, but they protect our internal organs and life systems. Sources are:

- dairy products ---- **low-fat dairy contains the same amount of nutrients as full-fat dairy with fewer calories and less saturated fat**
  - leafy greens
  - fortified foods: orange juice, cereal, rice/nut/soy milks, bread, tofu
  - nuts (especially almonds and walnuts)
  - beans.
- Stress to participants that by eating a balanced diet we can easily ensure that our families will enjoy strong bones and teeth and healthy hearts to last a lifetime.

**4. C. Calcium-rich foods contribute to healthy lives by:**

- building strong bones, teeth and muscles
- making sure the heart beats in a healthy rhythm
- regulating blood pressure and nerve health
- helping to control weight
- reducing the risk of diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, some cancers
- preventing bone loss in later life.

**4. D. The enemies of bones, teeth and hearts:**

- a. smoking (damages heart and lungs, can cause mouth cancers)
- b. excessive alcohol (kidney and liver damage)
- c. salt (contributes to high blood pressure & leaches calcium from bones)
- d. lack of exercise (weakens bones, muscles and heart)
- e. sodas (replaces calcium-rich milk with sugars & empty calories)
- f. fried and fatty foods (damage heart and arteries)
- g. excessive caffeine (leaches calcium from bones)
- h. too many packaged foods, restaurant meals and fast food (contains too much salt, fat, sugar and calories and not enough whole grains, fruits and vegetables).

**5. A. (Page 6) To understand the importance of fiber in the diet.**

Find out what fiber means to your participants.

- Fiber is the part of plants that cannot be digested easily.
- It pushes food through the digestive tract for easy elimination.
- There is no fiber in meats, poultry, eggs or dairy products.
- Fiber is found in whole grains, vegetables, fruit, nuts, seeds, dried beans, lentils and split peas.
- Look at the picture opposite page 6. Have the participants identify the fiber-rich foods.
- Which ones do they eat? How often?
- Each day choose foods that will add up to give you 20-30 grams of fiber.
- Keep fiber levels in balance. Too much is as detrimental as too little.
- Google “*uconn what’s your fiber score*” for a great visual / info graphic on fiber consumption and levels.
- Most Americans eat only half the recommended amount of fiber.

## 5. B. Fiber Sources:

1. **Whole Grains** are the seeds of grasses. They include the bran and the germ.

- Read labels carefully. They must say whole grain/wheat and it must be the first ingredient.
- Don’t be misled by the words, *stone-ground, multi-grain, cracked wheat, 100% wheat, seven-grain or bran.*
- Along with fiber, whole grains also contain important vitamins, minerals and protein.
- Some grains are ground into refined flour where they lose their fiber and other nutrients.
- Enriched or fortified means that **some** of the lost nutrients are added back. Folic acid was the latest nutrient to be put back into refined products.
- Color is not an indicator of whole grains. Products can be brown because of added molasses or other ingredients.
- Flours from (whole) grains can be found in:

- a. bread, rolls, buns, biscuits and tortillas
- b. pasta
- c. cereals
- d. baked goods: muffins, cakes, cookies, pie crusts, doughnuts (though not very often).
- e. crackers and pretzels.

- **Whole grains include:**

- a. brown and wild rice
- b. wheat
- c. couscous
- d. bulgur
- e. quinoa
- f. popcorn
- g. oatmeal
- h. millet, amaranth & barley

- Cereals advertised to kids that should be limited:

1. Reese's Puffs
2. Corn Pops
3. Lucky Charms
4. Cinnamon Toast crunch
5. Cap'n Crunch
6. Trix
7. Froot Loops
8. Fruity and Coco Pebbles
9. Cocoa Puffs and Cookie Crisp

- Cereals to enjoy:

1. Cheerios and Corn Flakes (plain)
2. Shredded Wheat (original version)
3. Raisin Bran
4. Wheaties and Kix (plain)
5. Grape Nuts and Chex (wheat)
7. Oatmeal and Cream of Wheat (plain)
8. Kashi and Muesli
9. Puffed Wheat and Total

**2. Fruits and Vegetables** contain fiber and many other nutrients.

- Removing seeds, peels and skins can reduce fiber and nutrient levels.
- Eat the whole fruit or vegetable rather than just drinking its juice.
- The closer a food is to its original source, the healthier it is. For example, **compare the fiber** in:
  - 1 medium apple with skin = 3.73 grams
  - 1 medium apple, no skin = 2.09 grams
  - ½ cup applesauce = 1.50 grams
  - 1 cup apple juice = .25 grams
- Serve fresh fruits and vegetables in bite sizes.
- High-fiber fruits:
  - a. strawberries and pineapple
  - b. apples and oranges
  - c. pears, bananas and cantaloupe
  - d. grapes and raisins
- High-fiber vegetables:
  - a. green beans and broccoli
  - b. cabbage, celery and carrots
  - c. corn, potatoes and yams with skin

**3. Dried beans, lentils, split peas, nuts and seeds:**

- are excellent sources of protein as well as fiber
- are cost effective sources of fiber and protein
- help control cholesterol and glucose levels
- promote movement of food through digestive tract
- nuts are high in good fats and calories. Don't over-eat. Usually one handful is the right amount.
- carefully check sodium levels on canned beans and rinse before using.

**5. C. Fiber contributes to health in many ways. High fiber foods:**

- are low in fats, salt, sugars and cholesterol-free

- prevent or relieve constipation by pushing food through our digestive tracts at regular intervals
- help solidify the stool and relieve loose, watery eliminations
- help lower cholesterol and glucose levels
- can reduce heart disease rates
- can reduce diabetes rates
- take longer to chew, giving our stomachs time to tell our brains that we are full and this will
- help control weight gain.

#### **5. D. High fiber snack foods:**

- fruits and veggies
- bean dips and hummus
- popcorn (Visit [www.NoMoreNakedPopcorn.com](http://www.NoMoreNakedPopcorn.com) for stores that carry their popcorn seasonings that are low in fats and salts and high in flavor....and can also be used on veggies)
- whole grain crackers (Akmaks, Triskets, graham crackers, etc) with peanut butter
- corn or whole wheat tortilla quesadillas with veggies and low-fat cheese.

#### **6. A. (Page 7) To understand that smart choices made time after time become healthy habits.**

- Practices or behaviors repeated time after time become habits.
- Healthy habits established in childhood will follow us through life improving the quality and quantity of our years.
- Unhealthy habits established in childhood will also follow us through life compromising the quality and quantity of our years.
- Young children have few choices in formations of habits. They follow the lead of their parents and care-givers, TV advertisers and later their peers.
- Unhealthy habits, not chosen by a child, will take time, energy and commitment to break or change.
- What habits would the participants like to change in their lives? Do they:

1. smoke
2. procrastinate
3. eat too much, too little
4. drink too much (sodas, alcohol, coffee, energy drinks)
5. exercise too often or not enough
6. bite their nails
7. judge too quickly
8. smile too infrequently?

- How do participants feel when they try to change or break these habits? (frustrated, angry, defeated, tired, challenged, successful....)
- How do they feel about preventing these habits from forming in their children's lives? (happy, successful, challenged, inspired, unconcerned....)
- **Preventing** the formation of unhealthy habits is much easier than trying to undo or change them at a later date.
- Healthy habits become guideposts for children to use as they grow and enter the world with fewer parental controls.

## **6. B. What behaviors lead to healthy habits?**

### **1. What do participants consider habitual behaviors?**

- making smart food and drink choices
  - regularly brushing and flossing teeth
  - getting enough sleep each night
  - exercising every day
  - daily eliminations
  - frequent bathing / showering / washing hair
  - positive attitudes
  - being helpful
- 
- How else would they like to see their children behave?

## **6. C. The results of family meals affect all areas of our lives.**

- Eating meals together feeds the body and the spirit.
- Children feel loved and cared for at the shared table.
- The dining table becomes your child's first "classroom".
- Healthier foods are eaten at home: more vegetables and fruit, fewer fried foods and sodas.
- Meals are more varied and balanced when prepared at home.
- Around the table, we eat more slowly and eat less, avoiding weight issues.
- Social skills (learning to take turns listening and talking, manners) are learned around the table.
- Academic grades improve with children who enjoy family meals.
- Children learn about their family history, rituals and values around the table.
- A child who is secure with his "place at the table" has higher self-esteem, greater confidence and over-all better emotional health. This results in fewer risky behaviors (smoking, drugs, alcohol, sexual activity, eating disorders, behavioral problems).
- Parents feel a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment with their family life and parenting skills as their family enjoys quality time with each other.
- Parents also have a better grasp of what is happening in their children's lives by regularly connecting around the table.
- As children age they will try to disengage from shared mealtimes. This is when they need it most, so stick to your guns and insist on most meals being eaten together. The older your children get, the more they learn to appreciate them.

## **6. D. Involve the whole family in meal prep and clean-up.**

- Meal planning, preparation and clean-up are not only the mother's responsibility.
- Planning weekly meals saves time, energy and money.
- Review section **2.B. 2** for ideas to get your family involved.

**6. E. Setting a good personal example is the best way to teach your children.**

- Your children will more likely do what they see you do, not what they hear you tell them to do.
- Do you take them to the park and sit on the bench?
- Do you tell them not to eat the less-than-healthy foods they see you enjoy?
- Do you watch TV or talk on your cell phone during meals instead of conversing with one another?
- Do you get enough sleep so that your moods, patience and energy levels are enjoyed by all?
- Are you excited about the opportunities to help your child become the best version of her/himself?

**7. A (child's) I will learn to make healthy food and drink choices.**

**1. A breast-fed baby gets the best start in life.**

- The benefits of breast-feeding include:
  1. strengthened immune systems
  2. strong mother-child emotional bonds
  3. reduced risk for obesity
  4. improved IQ's
  5. more open to new foods
  6. reduced risk of developing allergies, diarrhea, ear infections, leukemia, and Type 1 Diabetes.
- As a breast-fed baby is weaned, it is important to gradually and consistently introduce a variety of foods from all food groups.

**2. The food preferences established in the early years of childhood can follow a child through life.**

- The most important influence on a child's eating choices is the example set by the parents.
- By three years of age, many children have formed food preferences that will follow them through life.
- Children learn by imitating / copying the important people in their lives.
- Eating patterns are learned behaviors.
- Parents who eat many fruits and vegetables, have children who eat many fruits and vegetables.
- Parents who make unhealthy food and drink choices have children who do the same.

### **3. Conditions must be established in the home that support healthy food and drink choices.**

- Talk to your child as you enjoy a new food. Talk about the smells, tastes, textures, colors and health benefits.
- Have healthy snacks readily available.
- Have cleaned, bite-sized fruits and vegetables on the counter or an easily reached refrigerator shelf.
- Limit the amount of snack foods kept in the home.
- Read:
  1. ***Berenstain Bears and Too Much Junk Food*** (go to website)
  2. ***Vegetable Soup / The Fruit Bowl*** (Oasis Publications)
  3. ***Fabulous Food*** (CD and book)
  4. ***Spriggles Motivational Book Series*** (nutrition & fitness)

#### Activities:

1. **Farmers' Market Game** (Oasis Publications)
2. Paste pictures of a variety foods and drink (found in magazine and newspaper ads) on paper plates to create healthy MyPlate meals.
3. Make a "kitchen" using large cardboard boxes or check consignment shops for good deals on kitchen sets.
4. Play "Restaurant" and let your children serve you healthy foods you have "ordered".

5. Grow a garden. Studies show children eat more fruits and vegetables when they are involved in gardening projects at home or school.
6. Involve children in food selection.
  - Go to your local Farmers' Market or grocery produce section to find new fruit and vegetables and let your child select. Ask for assistance to find out what's in season, grown locally, or for health benefits and preparation tips. Make sure the child is included in the conversation.
  - In the cereal aisle, point out that packages with cartoon characters usually also contain lots of sugar that doesn't help our bodies or our teeth. Have fun looking for cereal labels that have less than 5 grams (g) of sugar/serving (tip: 4 grams = 1 teaspoon) and list a whole grain as the first ingredient.
  - Carefully select snack foods. Talk about "sometimes" or "party food" that can be enjoyed occasionally (chips, crackers, cookies, candies, doughnuts, etc). Avoid all packages foods that contain trans-fats (partially hydrogenated oils/fats).
  - Drinks and beverages are an important part of our daily diets. Dairy should be low or non-fat (after 2 years of age) and consumed through the teenage years, juices have to be made of only fruits and vegetables. Let your child find the 100% on the label and try to name the fruits and vegetables used.
  - Drink water many times each day.
  - Avoid energy drinks.
  - Limit fruit juice consumption to 4 to 6 ounces a day up to 6 years old.
7. Let kids help in the food prep. They can wash/scrub fruits and veggies, snap beans, tear lettuce, arrange platters, help set and clear the table.
8. Visit [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org) and click on **kids site** for

many activities, recipe ideas and health information and [www.lazytown.com](http://www.lazytown.com) for games, videos, activities and information on nutrition and fitness.

9. Enjoy regular family meals. Refer to **6.C.**

**Remember:**

- **Parents are the most important people in their children's lives and model the behaviors their children will copy.**
- **Preventing bad habits and health problems is easier than trying to change or fix them.**
- **Improving existing diets with gradual and consistent changes for the whole family will ensure success. Fad diets don't work!**
- **With common sense and commitment, you can raise the healthiest kids on the block!**