

# Lesson 11: Build Healthy Meals

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## Time Required

Estimated lesson timing is 40-60 minutes; however, this lesson can be expanded or shortened, as needed. We encourage you to tailor it to fit within the available class time. If time is limited, we recommend focusing on the Getting Started, Teaching Instructions and Reflections sections.

## Audience

High school students grades 9-12

## Lesson Overview

In this lesson, your students will learn how to plan a daily menu that meets all of their food group targets within their daily calorie allowance. Students create a daily meal plan using SuperTracker's Food Tracker feature and will complete the Build Healthy Meals handout to reflect on what they've learned.

## Getting Started

- **Why is this lesson important?** High school students are seeking autonomy in many aspects of their lives. We know that teens will make an increasing number of food and meal choices for themselves. Learning to build healthy meals can establish healthy eating patterns for a lifetime. This lesson provides an opportunity to inspire and empower them to make healthy decisions and to feel like they own their choices.
- **What can you do about it?** Frame this lesson as an exciting way for teens to understand the basics of healthy meals and how they can apply them to their lives. Make sure to consider teen motivations, including maintaining a healthy weight, having a healthy body image and exercising autonomy. It will also be important to recognize that for some students, many of their eating occasions will not be meals in the traditional sense. Snacking or grazing, eating a takeout meal on-the-run, or relying on a protein drink are all alternatives that make up an increasing proportion of teen "meals."

A great way to start this lesson would be to have your students think about the meals they eat, and then **ask your students:**

- What does a typical breakfast, lunch and supper look like on a daily basis? Are you grabbing food on the go? Are you sitting down to eat with family or friends?
- How does the way you eat a meal influence your food choices and healthfulness?
- What was the healthiest meal you've eaten in the past few days?
- Why did you choose that meal?
- Who prepared it?
- What did you like about it?

# Teacher's Lesson Preparation

## SuperTracker

- Watch the Food Tracker site tour video, How to use Food Tracker: Tracking foods, on YouTube (3 min. 8 sec.).  
Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZ49FuUpxnE&feature=youtu.be>
- Review navigation of the SuperTracker website.  
Link: <https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/default.aspx>
- Familiarize yourself with the Food Tracker feature.  
Link: <https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/foodtracker.aspx>

CLICK A FOOD GROUP TO EXPLORE



- Log onto the interactive site [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov).
- Point out that MyPlate might not reflect the way they typically eat, even at home. Explain that MyPlate is not a literal image of a healthy meal but a symbol or icon for the optimal combination of food groups and associated amounts. In that context, it offers guidance on how to incorporate all food groups into a meal. Everyone's "plate" may look a little different – foods from different groups may be mixed together, for example – but they can all be part of a healthy diet.

## Materials

- 10 Tips for Healthy Meals handout, copies made for each student.  
Link: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/ten-tips>
- Build Healthy Meals handout (found at the end of this lesson plan), copies made for each of your students.
- Measuring cups and cereal to demonstrate portion sizes.
- If your budget allows, buy some food models to show students actual portion sizes.

## Setup

- Provide computers with internet access for you and your students; if not available, then arrange for another location, such as a library or computer lab, with internet access.
- Screen and projector.

**Of note:** In this lesson, your students will create a daily menu by entering foods and beverages in Food Tracker. If you would like to observe student food entries, consider setting up a SuperTracker group prior to the lesson. You can create a group for your students and invite them to join (via email or with a group-specific access code). Ask students in the group if they opt to share this information with you. You can run reports to view and analyze foods and beverages entered by your students after they have joined your group – both for the group as a whole and for individual group members. For the purposes of this lesson, running the Group Meal Summary Report (Member Report) would allow you to review the menus your students create in one central location. Please note that it may take up to 30 minutes for recent report data to update.

For detailed instructions on how to create and manage a group and run group reports, please reference the following resources:

- **SuperTracker Groups & Challenges User Guide**  
Link: <https://supertracker.usda.gov/Documents/SuperTracker%20Groups%20And%20Challenges%20User%20Guide.pdf>
- **Getting Started with SuperTracker Groups Video**  
Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ui1wgSznUlo>

## Lesson Objectives

Following this lesson, your students should be able to:

1. Build a healthy meal.
2. Create a sample menu that meets daily food group targets.
3. Develop a sample menu within a daily calorie allowance.

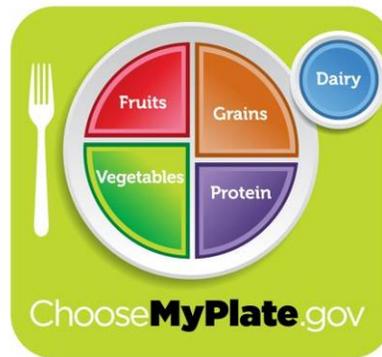


Ask your students to list their three favorite foods in each food group again after the lesson to see if they categorized those foods correctly. Were there any changes or surprises?

## Teaching Instructions

1. Consider beginning with a stretch and exercise break (suggested activities found on page 13-14).
  2. Provide a brief overview of the topics to be covered and what you hope your students will get out of the lesson.
- Kick off the lesson by asking your students one or more of the following questions:
    - What are your three favorite foods in each food group?
    - How could you incorporate foods from different food groups into your daily meals and snacks?
    - How often do you plan ahead when deciding what to eat? If so, what do you think about?

- Are you familiar with the concept of meal planning? Do you think this would help you eat more healthfully?
3. Tell your students that everything they eat and drink over time matters. The right mix can help them be healthier now and in the future.
  4. **Ask your students** to describe a healthy meal. What components make up a healthy meal?
  5. Show your students the MyPlate icon found at [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov) and explain that it can be a helpful reminder when planning meals.



- While not all of our meals are eaten on a plate, it's helpful to picture what MyPlate looks like when planning a meal.
  - MyPlate reminds us to include a variety of food groups in our meals: Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Protein Foods, and Dairy.
  - And to make about half our plate fruits and vegetables.
  - It's also important to choose foods and beverages with less saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.
    - Foods that contain more saturated fat, for example butter, are usually solid at room temperature. Whereas foods that contain more unsaturated fat, for example vegetable oil, are usually liquid at room temperature. Too much saturated fat is bad for your health and can increase your risk for heart disease.
    - Sodium is found in salt and many processed foods. Too much sodium is bad for your health. It can increase your blood pressure and your risk for a heart attack and stroke. Heart disease and stroke are the leading causes of death in the United States. Eating less sodium can reduce risk for high blood pressure.
    - Added sugars (in either solid or liquid form, like syrups) are those introduced to foods or beverages when they are processed or prepared. This does not include naturally occurring sugars such as those in milk and fruits. Added sugars add calories without adding nutritional value.
6. Distribute the 10 Tips for Healthy Meals handout (also see below) and review them. As you discuss these tips ask your students which are easier or harder to adopt and why. Encourage students to offer their own strategies.
    - **Make half your plate veggies and fruits:** Vegetables and fruits are full of nutrients and help to promote good health. Filling half your plate with fruits and veggies is one way to reduce the total number of calories and increase the nutrients you need while keeping you full. As you're picking fruits and veggies to add to your meal, keep the following tips in mind:

- Choose red, orange, and dark-green vegetables such as tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and broccoli. Vegetables that are darker in color generally have more nutrients and provide more health benefits.
- Adding spinach or romaine lettuce and tomato to your sandwich is an easy way to get more veggies in your meal.
- Tomato sauce and salsa may not seem like vegetables, but are an easy way to add veggies to a meal or snack. Dip into them with carrots, cauliflower, red peppers, broccoli or other vegetables to add even more veggies to the meal. By making this swap from chips, you also save calories and fat.
- **Add lean protein:** Choose protein foods, such as lean beef (92% lean or above) and pork, or chicken, turkey, beans, or tofu. Twice a week, make seafood such as frozen shrimp or canned salmon the protein on your plate.
- **Include whole grains:** Aim to make at least half your grains whole grains. Look for the words “100% whole grain” or “100% whole wheat” on the food label. Whole grains provide more nutrients, like fiber, than refined grains.
- **Don’t forget the dairy:** Pair your meal with a cup of fat-free or low-fat milk. They provide the same amount of calcium and other essential nutrients as whole milk, but less fat and calories.
  - Don’t drink milk? Try soymilk (soy beverage, almond milk, etc.) as your beverage or include fat-free or low-fat yogurt or cottage cheese in your meal. Other options can be found online at <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/dairy>
- **Avoid extra fat:** Using heavy gravies or sauces may be tasty but will add fat and calories to otherwise healthy choices.
  - For example, steamed broccoli is great, but avoid topping it with cheese sauce. Try other options, like a sprinkling of grated parmesan cheese or a squeeze of lemon.
  - Another way to add flavor without adding fat is to explore the tastes of herbs and spices. This is an easy way to jazz up your meal and make it more tasty. Some great herbs and spices to try include:
    - red pepper flakes
    - oregano
    - curry powder
    - garlic powder
- **Take your time:** Savor your food. Eat slowly, enjoy the taste and textures, and pay attention to how you feel. Be mindful. Eating very quickly or eating while you’re doing something else may cause you to eat too much.
  - Take a pause in between bites and put your knife and fork down before taking another bite to pace yourself.
  - Don’t eat straight from a bag or container, instead portion out a serving size on a plate or in a bowl and eat only that amount to ensure you don’t overeat.
- **Use a smaller plate:** Use a smaller plate at meals to help with portion control. That way you can finish your entire plate and feel satisfied without overeating.
  - Use a lunch or salad plate instead of a regular sized dinner plate at home.

- **Take control of your food:** Point out that eating at home makes it easier to know exactly what you are eating and to make sure your portion sizes align with MyPlate guidelines. Since so many meals and snacks are consumed away from home, your best bet is to be an informed consumer. If you eat out, check it out! Students know which places serve the dishes they like, the next step is to compare the nutrition information. Other tips for eating out include:
  - Order something small. Try a half-portion or healthy appetizer, like hummus (chickpea spread) with whole-wheat pitas or grilled chicken. If you order a large meal, take half of it home or split it with someone else at the table.
  - Limit the amount of fast food you eat. When you do get fast food, say “no thanks” to super-sized or value-sized options, like those that come with fries and soda.
  - Choose salad with low-fat dressing, a sandwich with mustard instead of mayo, or other meals that have fruits, veggies, and whole grains.
  - Choose grilled options, like chicken, or remove breading from fried items.
  - Avoid items that use the words creamy, breaded, battered, or buttered.



## Resource

### What counts as 1 cup of fruit?

1 small apple, 2.5 inches in diameter **Or**

32 seedless grapes **Or**

1 large peach **Or**

1 large banana

Link: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/fruit>



## Resource

### How many vegetables do you need to eat daily?

Boys, 14-18 years, 3 cups

Girls, 14-18 years, 2.5 cups



- **Try new foods:** Keep it interesting by picking out new foods you've never tried before. You may find a new favorite! Trade fun and tasty recipes with friends or find recipes online.
- **Satisfy your sweet tooth in a healthy way:** Indulge in a naturally sweet dessert dish—fruit! Serve a fresh fruit cocktail or a fruit parfait made with yogurt. For a hot dessert, bake apples and top with cinnamon.

### Tip

Tell your students about the Small Plate Movement developed by the Cornell University Food and Brand Lab, a site where they can take the pledge to eat the largest meal of the day from a 9- to-10-inch plate for a month. Have them photograph the results and see how much less food they eat.

Link: [https://foodpsychology.cornell.edu/JACR/Small\\_Plates\\_Lose\\_Weight](https://foodpsychology.cornell.edu/JACR/Small_Plates_Lose_Weight)

7. Demonstrate the Food Tracker feature by showing the “How to use Food Tracker: Tracking foods” SuperTracker site tour video available on YouTube (3 min. 8 sec.). Note – Lessons 3 and 5 also include information on using the Food Tracker feature. If you have already introduced the functionality to your class, you can skip this step and instead direct them to the SuperTracker login.  
Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZ49FuUpxnE&feature=youtu.be>
8. When using Food Tracker, your students will need to estimate approximate portions for foods. Using measuring cups and cereal, measure out various amounts to show your students what a ¼-cup, ½-cup, and 1- cup portion looks like. If your budget allows, consider buying some food models to bring into class.=

### Tip

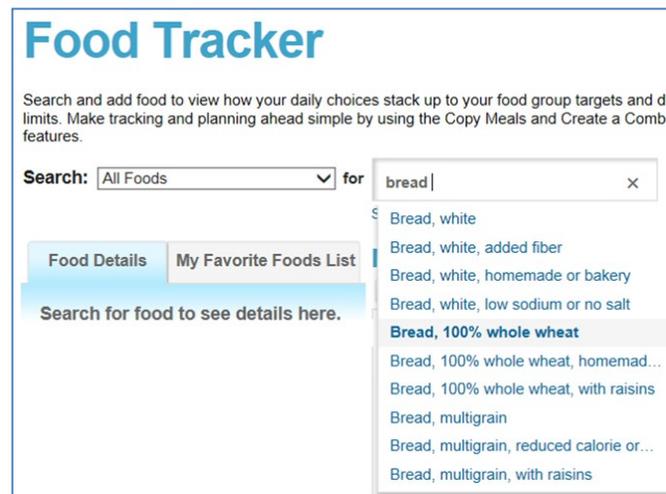
Pull up the Dining Decisions game on the classroom computer and have the class participate in playing!

Link: <http://www.cdc.gov/bam/nutrition/game.html>

9. Go to the SuperTracker website.  
Link: <https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/default.aspx>
10. Have students plan meals and snacks for a day. If you want them to plan based on their individual calorie allowance and food group targets, they will need to create a profile on SuperTracker to get a personalized plan. Instructions for creating a profile are provided in Lesson 3: What's Your Plan. Alternatively, your students can plan a menu based on a default 2,000-calorie allowance and food group plan.
11. Show your students how to navigate to the Food Tracker feature.



12. Demonstrate how to search for a food using Food Tracker. For example, search for the food “bread” and select “Bread, 100% whole wheat”.



13. Show your students how to add the food to their day by (1) choosing the amount, (2) selecting a meal, and (3) clicking the blue “Add” button. For example, add 1 slice of 100% whole wheat bread to breakfast.

Food Details My Favorite Foods List

**Bread, 100% whole wheat**

Choose an amount:

1 regular slice

Choose Meal Time(s):

Breakfast

Lunch

Dinner

Snacks

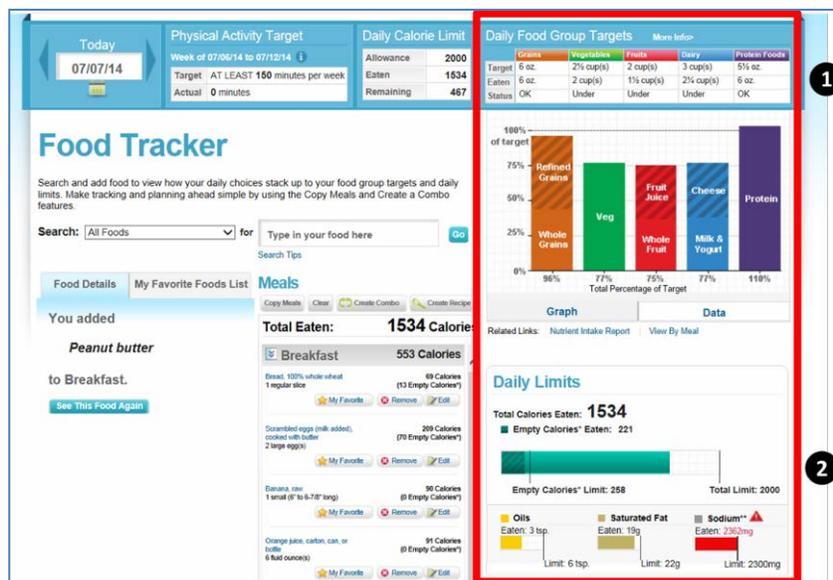
+ Add Cancel

Food Info Nutrient Info

**Total Calories: 69**

| Food Groups  | Limits                  |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| Grains 1 oz. | Empty Calories* 13      |
|              | Solid Fats 7 Calories   |
|              | Added Sugars 6 Calories |

14. Continue adding foods to the day and show your students where to see their progress toward their (1) daily food group targets and (2) daily calorie allowance.



15. Assign homework.

- Your students will use SuperTracker's Food Tracker to build a daily menu (including breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks) that meets their daily food group targets and calorie allowance.
- Your students will complete the *Build Healthy Meals* handout to answer questions about the sample menu they created.

 Tip

For extra credit, **ask your students** to create a daily menu that meets the food group targets for a family member or for an athlete whose height and weight can be determined from media reports or team information.

 Tip

- **Ask your students** to draw or list what they think is a serving size for themselves of each food group.
- Show them the Portion Distortion slides in class share the PDF versions as printouts or have them students download the slides for use at home. <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/eat-right/portion-distortion.htm>
- Ask them to list a favorite entrée in their meal plans that exceeded their expectations for calories.
- How active would they need to be to use those extra calories?

## Reflection, Evaluation, and Discussion

Summarize the class discussion. Encourage your students to ask questions if they need further clarification of the lesson.

- What are some strategies for building a healthy meal?
- What steps will you take to eat healthier meals?
- What barriers prevent you from eating healthier meals? If so, how might you overcome them?
- How can you make decisions when eating at home to build a healthy meal?
- What can you do to make eating a meal out more healthy?

 Tip

While eating well and exercising are important in maintaining a healthy weight, they are also critical to preventing chronic diseases. Being overweight or obese can raise your risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and stroke. You may have family members with one of these diseases or may even have one of these yourself.



## Beyond the Classroom

### In School

Help create a menu for extracurricular school activity (dinner dance, athletic banquet, etc.).

### Out of School

Create weekend menu of healthy meals for family. Teach friends, family or a small group the components of a healthy meal.

### Wellness Council

Develop farm to school program to increase purchases of produce from local farms.

## Notes

Record any notes about this lesson. For example, did students understand the material? Are there any changes to the lesson you would like to make for next time?

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Name:

Date:

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## Build Healthy Meals

### Instructions

Use SuperTracker's Food Tracker feature to build a 1-day menu that meets your daily food group targets and stays within your daily calorie allowance.

You can access Food Tracker here: <https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/foodtracker.aspx>

1. What did you plan for breakfast in your menu?
- 
- 

2. How many total calories are in the daily menu you created? \_\_\_\_\_ calories

3. How much of each food group does your menu include?

Grains \_\_\_\_\_ ounces

Vegetables \_\_\_\_\_ cups

Fruits \_\_\_\_\_ cups

Dairy \_\_\_\_\_ cups

Protein Foods \_\_\_\_\_ ounces

4. How many grams of saturated fat are in the daily menu you created? \_\_\_\_\_ grams

5. Did you go over your saturated fat limit? If yes, what changes could you make to lower the saturated fat in your menu?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
 No \_\_\_\_\_

6. How many grams of added sugars are in the daily menu you created? \_\_\_\_\_ grams

7. Did you go over your added sugars limit? If yes, what changes could you make to lower the added sugars in your menu?

- Yes \_\_\_\_\_
- No

8. How much sodium is in the daily menu you create? \_\_\_\_\_ milligrams

9. Did you go over your sodium limit? If yes, what changes could you make to lower the sodium in your menu?

- Yes \_\_\_\_\_
- No

10. How difficult was it to plan a daily menu that meets all five food group targets within your calorie allowance? Check one:

- It was easy
- It was difficult
- It was neither easy nor difficult

11. Would you eat the foods you selected for your menu? Why or why not?

- Yes \_\_\_\_\_
- No \_\_\_\_\_

12. Did you include any foods that you do not typically eat that you would like to try? If yes, please list them.

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13. Describe similarities and differences between the daily menu you created and what you typically eat. Similarities (for example, I drink low-fat milk, which was included in my menu):

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Differences (for example, I typically eat less fruits and vegetables than the menu I created):

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