



Family Meals: Easy, Tasty, and Healthy

Session Overview:

This session is intended to help busy parents plan, shop, and prepare healthy, low-cost meals for their families, learn ways to let their children help, and how parents and children are partners for healthy eating.

Target Audience: Parents with young children

Group Size: Individuals or small groups of 5 to 7 participants

Needed Time: 45 minutes

Behavioral Objectives:

After the session participants will be able to:

- Identify and use at least two time saving or low-cost ways to prepare healthy family meals each week.
- Name two tasks their child can do to help make a family meal and commit to letting their child help do a task at least once a week.
- Share feeding responsibilities with their child/children.

Key Messages:

- Cook together. Eat together. Talk together. Make mealtimes a family time.
- Timesaving tips can help parents make easy, tasty, and healthy family meals, with less stress and cost.
- Children can help parents get ready for or make family meals.
- Patience works better than pressure. Offer your children new foods, then let them choose how much to eat. Children are more likely to enjoy a food when eating it is their own choice.

Materials Needed for the Session:

- Nametags, markers, and flipchart (group)
- Highlighters or pencils
- Samples of “make and serve in a hurry” foods such as those pictured in the “make a meal” visual (brown rice, noodles, peanut butter, black beans, green beans, frozen vegetables, canned tomatoes, ground beef, bread, eggs, soup, baking mix, and yogurt)
- MyPlate poster

- “Feeding responsibilities” activity
 - 6 cups labeled with child feeding responsibilities
 - ¼ cup measure, 1 cup measure, 1 tablespoon measure
 - Zippered bag of rice
 - Child size plate, spoon, fork, glass (optional)
- MyPlate folder
- Handouts for participants:
 - [Family Meals – Easy, Tasty, and Healthy](#) (order from ISU Extension and Outreach state office)
 - [Family Meals Tip Sheet/Recipe Sheet](#) (print off, make copies)
 - Duplicate copy goal sheet (order from ISU Extension and Outreach state office)

Outline of 45 minute session:

- Welcome, goal checkup, and introduction to Family Meals – Easy, Tasty, and Healthy! (5 minutes)
- Discussion group activities – How do you decide what to make for dinner? (10 minutes)
- Activity – play the Make a Meal game (15 minutes)
- Activity – Feeding Responsibilities (10 minutes)
- Sum up and home activity (5 minutes)

Prior to the lesson, the educator should review the information on the handout [Family Meals – Easy, Tasty, and Healthy!](#), directions for playing the Make a Meal game, and the Feeding Responsibilities activity. Additional information is found at www.choosemyplate.gov. See “[More Resources](#)” at the end of the lesson.

WELCOME TO Family Meals – Easy, Tasty, and Healthy!:

Welcome to Loving Your Family Feeding Their Future. This program is brought to you by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Please make your own nametag (first names only). *Make sure each has a MyPlate folder, a copy of the [Family Meals – Easy, Tasty, and Healthy](#) handout, the [Family Meals Tip Sheet/Recipe Sheet](#), and a pencil. Add other points of interest, as needed, such as the location of restrooms and water fountains.*

GOAL CHECKUP: How did you do on the goal you set?

BEGIN:

What are the names and ages of your children? Give parents time to share.

DISCUSSION GROUP ACTIVITIES:

BEGIN:

Today our group will be talking about:

- Planning ahead to make meals easier, tastier, healthier, faster, and less expensive.
- Shopping and buying low-cost foods to make and serve in a hurry.
- Using time-saving tips when cooking meals.
- Involving children in making meals.
- How parents and children are partners in healthy eating.

THEN:

Read aloud the following from the introduction portion of the [Family Meals Tip Sheet/Recipe Sheet](#). Encourage mothers to follow along as you read:

“Mom, What are you making for supper? I did not like to hear that question. I often did not have an answer. Like most moms, I wanted my family to eat healthier foods. I knew I had to take action. With the help of my nutrition educator, I learned that my family needed to eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. It still seemed hard to do. I needed a plan to change what we ate and how we ate. On top of that, my family is so busy. Work and school take up most of our time. Does this sound like you?”

Pause and let the parents think about the question, then ask the following questions. Ask parents to share their responses for each question with the person sitting next to them. After sharing together in pairs, allow parents to share their responses with the group for each question before moving on to the next one.

ASK:

- How do you decide what to make for dinner?
- What do you do to make a quick meal?
- What do you do to make a healthy meal?
- *Point to the [MyPlate](#) poster.* What ideas does this poster give you?
- What are low-cost foods?

Using the appropriate responses from parents:

POINT OUT:

- Healthy meals can be simple. You can add vegetables to a favorite, low-cost food like packaged macaroni and cheese.
- Cook when you have more time. On the weekend, make a double recipe of a casserole and freeze it for next week.
- Do some tasks ahead like washing and trimming vegetables or making fruit salad a few hours or the day before your meal.
- Cook in a fast way - microwave, broil, or stir-fry - when you can.
- Make no-cook meals or snacks such as salads with low-cost foods like canned tuna, chicken or beans; cold sandwiches; raw vegetables with low-fat yogurt or dip; or fruit. Children like finger foods!
- You can stretch your food dollars by using Food Assistance, making a shopping list, checking store sales, and buying generic or store brands.

ACTIVITY: Play Make a Meal

- *Display the “make and serve in a hurry” foods on the table. Foods such as those pictured in the “make a meal” visual (brown rice, noodles, peanut butter, black beans, green beans, frozen vegetables, canned tomatoes, ground beef, bread, eggs, soup, baking mix, and yogurt.*
- Each parent should pick two different foods from the “make and serve in a hurry” foods that are displayed on the table.
- *After everyone has picked their foods, ask the group:*

- How would you use your foods to make a snack or meal (breakfast, lunch, or dinner)? You can add other foods to complete the snack or meal.
- How would you make the meal low-cost?
- *Have participants work in pairs and share their ideas with each other. Ask if any groups want to share their menu ideas and record on a flipchart or blackboard if available.*

ASK:

- How can your children help make a meal? *Let the group brainstorm some ideas. Write the ideas on the flip chart.*

Parents often worry about their child's eating habits, growth and weight, nutrition and manners. There is a division of responsibility between parents and children that will help establish a healthy eating relationship.

ACTIVITY: Feeding Responsibilities

Pass cups out to participants. If the group is small, participants may have more than one cup; if the group is large, not everyone will have a cup.

Children love to build, so let's build a pyramid with our cups.

- Who has the cup with number one on it? Please read what it says on the cup and put the cup on the table so everyone can see.
- *Discuss the points under number one.*
- *Continue with each of the cups, discussing the points under each responsibility, and building the pyramid.*

1. Selecting, buying food, making meals:

- Children and preschoolers need the same nutrients as adults, just in different amounts.
- Adults are responsible for providing good, nutritious food.
- As an adult, it is your responsibility to prepare the meal. If you are away at mealtimes, you need to make arrangements for meals or snacks.
- Adults can set a good example by eating all types of food. Research shows that children have to see food several times before they will try it, and several more times before they learn to like it.

2. Presenting food:

- Parents are responsible for presenting food to children—serve food that follows MyPlate and in serving sizes appropriate for a child's age.
- What are some ways to give children food in a form they can handle?
- Child-size eating equipment, unbreakable, sides on plate, wide-bottom cups.
- Provide appropriate serving sizes. The general guideline is 1 tablespoon per year of age. *Measure out 1 tablespoon rice in a bowl. If a child is 4, start with ¼ cup.* If children want more, let them have more. Do not withhold food from children.
- Milk does not follow the one tablespoon per year guideline. Depending on their age children need two to three 8 ounce glasses each day. *Show the plastic cup and point out where 8 ounces is on the cup.*

- Teach children if they do not want food, they should leave it on the plate without making negative comments.
3. **Regular meals and snacks that are pleasant:**
 - Toddlers and young children need three meals a day and planned snacks between meals, to make eating happen about every two or three hours. This is because children have small stomachs.
 - Watch juice and milk between meals. Children fill up on these drinks and will not be hungry for meals. Offer water for thirst.
 - Snacks have a time and place.
 - Avoid distractions and criticism. Learn how to talk to each other and listen.
 4. **How much food is eaten:**
 - The child is responsible for how much is eaten.
 - What is the rule for serving sizes for children?
 - Need to communicate with all involved with the child's feeding.
 5. **To eat or not to eat:**
 - Deciding to eat or not to eat is the child's responsibility. They may not eat because they may not be hungry or like the food offered.
 6. **How the body turns out:**
 - Parents cannot change the size of their child. Parents can provide nutritious food on a regular basis and encourage regular physical activity.

We have built our pyramid of feeding responsibilities. It all started with number one, selecting, buying food, and making meals. If this basic parent responsibility is not completed, (*pull out cup #1*) the feeding partnership cannot occur.

To review the parent-child responsibilities, pick up the cups one by one and ask participants: Is this a parent responsibility or a child responsibility? Note: parent/adult responsibilities are cups 1, 2, and 3; child responsibilities are cups 4, 5, and 6.

Look at the parent responsibilities. If we do our job by providing good foods in a positive atmosphere, we have done our job and our children will learn to be responsible for their bodies.

SUM UP:

- Review the tips on the *Family Meals – Easy, Tasty, and Healthy!* handout.
- Refer to the [Family Meals Tip Sheet/Recipe Sheet](#) for more ideas on making low-cost, easy meals.

HOME ACTIVITY:

- What would you like to do in the next week to try some of the tips you learned today?
- Write/circle on the **Family Meals – Easy, Tasty, and Healthy!** handout two timesaving or low-cost tips you will try and one task you will let your child do to help make a meal during the week.
- *Give each participant a duplicate sheet to record their goals.* Encourage the participants to post the white sheet on their refrigerators to be reminded of the goal during the next week. *Educator should keep the yellow sheet and attach to the participant’s lesson/date sheet.*
- You can keep your handouts in your MyPlate folder. Please bring this folder to each lesson.

THANK PARTICIPANTS FOR COMING. SET A TIME FOR THE NEXT MEETING.

More Resources:

The USDA website, www.choosemyplate.com provides detailed information about MyPlate:

- Click on the “10 Tips Nutrition Education Series” (left side of page).

This material is funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known in Iowa as Food Assistance, helps people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact your local Department of Human Services or go to www.dhs.state.ia.us. 5/12

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