

How Well Do You Think You Eat?

(Grade 6 to 12)

Overview

In this lesson, students will explore what it means to eat well, track their daily food intake, and make personal plans to improve their eating habits. Extension activities provide opportunities to explore various patterns of eating, including those from different cultures.

Estimated time: 30 - 40 minutes for learning activities 1 to 3.

Additional time: 10 - 15 minutes for learning activity 4.

Key Concepts

- Eating the recommended amount and type of food each day helps achieve better overall health and maintain a healthy body weight.
- The Food Guide describes the amount of food people need and the type of food that is part of a healthy eating pattern.
- [FoodTrack™—Check on Balance](#) helps students put the information in the Food Guide into action.

Materials

- Set of “[FoodTrack™—Check on Balance](#)” (COB) brochures*
- “[Sizing Up Food Guide Servings](#)” poster (included in the [FoodTrack™ Leader’s Kit*](#))
- Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide (included in the [FoodTrack™ Leader’s Kit*](#) and also available from your local Health Unit)
- [BC’s Food Mosaic](#) (included in the [FoodTrack™ Leader’s Kit*](#))
- Teacher Backgrounder
- [FoodTrack™](#) overhead transparencies (OT) (included in the [FoodTrack™ Leader’s Kit*](#))
- Overhead projector

* Available from BC Dairy Association

How Well Do You Think You Eat?

(Grade 6 to 12)

Procedure

Learning Activity 1: How well do you think you eat?

- a. Begin by asking the students the following questions: How well do you think you eat? How do you know?
- b. List all the answers on an overhead or the board. (e.g. I have lots of energy; I don't get sick often; I feel good; I eat the right kinds and amounts of foods; I eat lots of salads; etc.)
- c. Refer to your backgrounder for facts on "Eating Habits of Canadian Adolescents".
- d. While these answers may be related to eating well, they do not provide the complete picture nor do they explain how to assess and practice eating well. Today we will learn how to assess your own diet and make plans to improve if you need to.

Learning Activity 2: Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide

- a. Show Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide. Explain that this Food Guide describes the amount of food people need and the type of food that is part of a healthy eating pattern.
- b. Introduce FoodTrack™—Check on Balance and explain that this resource will enable them to put Canada's Food Guide into action.

Learning Activity 3: FoodTrack™—Check on Balance

- a. Have students record everything they ate and drank for one day (step 1 in FoodTrack™).

Demonstrate appropriate recording of foods eaten. (Use OT, STEP 1)

Here are some guidelines for recording:

- Specify the type of food or beverage (drink, juice)
- Specify the amount consumed (glass, cup, helpings...)
- List the components for combination foods:
 - Minestrone Soup: tomatoes, carrots, green beans, pasta, kidney beans, parmesan cheese, broth
 - Pizza: crust, cheese, green peppers and onions
- Include beverages you had each time you ate food.
- Don't forget spreads (e.g. jam or butter on toast), condiments (e.g. mayonnaise, relish, mustard) or salad dressings.

How Well Do You Think You Eat? (Grade 6 to 12)

- Ask yourself the following questions: Did I eat / drink anything between meals?

Here are examples of correct and incorrect ways to record your meals and snacks:

Correct	Incorrect
Milk, 1 glass	milk
Toast, 1 slice with 1 tsp butter	toast
Pizza (crust, cheese, green peppers, onions), 1 slice	pizza

Review food group classification and Food Guide Servings using the “Sizing Up Food Guide Servings” poster. Refer to the Teacher Backgrounder for teaching tips on Canada’s Food Guide.

Demonstrate how to estimate Food Guide Servings by doing one example using a combination food: (OT, STEP 2)

Bowl of Minestrone Soup:	Food Guide Servings I Ate:
Tomatoes, Carrots, Green Beans	1 (Vegetables & Fruit)
Pasta	1 (Grain Products)
Kidney Beans	½ (Meat & Alternatives)
Parmesan Cheese	Not enough to count
Broth	(Foods to Limit)

- Have students estimate the Food Guide Servings they ate and calculate “My Total” for each food group. (COB, STEP 2)
- Demonstrate how to complete STEP 3 in COB. (Use OT, STEP 3)

Then have students do STEP 3 by completing the table and having them check the appropriate statements under the table. (COB, STEP 3)

Note: Focusing too much on amount and types of food consumed can be a trigger for unhealthy eating habits and even developing an eating disorder. Make sure students read the Step 3 statements carefully. To learn more about promoting a healthy body image, contact us at nutrition@bcdairy.ca or visit [Jessie’s Legacy](#), a BC organization dedicated to the prevention and awareness of eating disorders.

- Demonstrate how to make a plan in STEP 4 in COB. Discuss appropriate plans that are specific and realistic. (Use OT, STEPS 4 & 5)

Tips: Plans should be set as an action to be taken, hardly ever for a negative or non-action.

How Well Do You Think You Eat? (Grade 6 to 12)

To help your students set realistic goals, ask the following questions:

- Which of the foods you eat most days do you wish to continue eating?
- Which of the foods that you eat now would you be willing to eat more/less of to improve your nutrition?
- Where will you be?
- Is this food available?
- Can you afford it?
- Will you have enough time to prepare or eat this food?
- Do you need to make another choice?

Guide your students in selecting specific foods they can eat at specific times corresponding to the food group they need to improve. Goals should include both content (hamburger, apple...) and time (lunch, dinner...) to be effective.

Examples: I will eat an apple every day at lunch.

I will replace my glass of tea at breakfast with a glass of milk.

Goals should be prioritized. Encourage students to begin with just one food group.

- e. Make sure that plans are realistic by asking questions in STEP 5 in COB. (Use OT, STEPS 4 & 5)

Remind them that small steps are important. Goals that are too ambitious are often not met. Explain that they have now learned a simple process to check for food group balance.

Learning Activity 4: Are You On Track?

This follow-up allows students to practice their plan, evaluate its adequacy and share problem solving ideas.

- a. Explain that for the next 3 days students will be tracking their Food Guide Servings from the food group they chose in their plan in STEP 4. (Use OT, FOLLOW UP YOUR PLAN)
- b. Demonstrate how they will track Food Guide Servings using FOLLOW UP YOUR PLAN in COB. Have participants fill in the blank: "FOODS I ATE FROM THE _____ FOOD GROUP". They should keep FoodTrack™—Check on Balance with them over the next 3 days so that they can complete the FOLLOW UP YOUR PLAN section.

How Well Do You Think You Eat?

(Grade 6 to 12)

- c. Ask students if they noticed any changes (physical, emotional, academic) after they had a chance to improve their eating habits. Ask them about the factors that prevented them from implementing their plans.
- d. Ask your students how they think these factors can be overcome. Provide them or encourage them to share tips for overcoming these barriers for the food group they chose. Teacher contribution and sharing of ideas with students are most important here.
- e. Have students revise their plan accordingly.
- f. Encourage repeating FoodTrack™ several times in order to internalize the mental process. Stress the fact that planning and practicing help to make changes happen. Remember, success comes with practice!

Extension Activities

- Visit [Canada's Food Guide](#) online, click on “MY Food Guide” and print out your own personal one-page Food Guide including your commonly eaten foods. These personal Food Guides can be printed out in the language of your choice. Twelve languages are available, including English, French, Chinese and Punjabi.
- Form a group and analyze one of the current popular diets (e.g., Atkins, Keto, Zone, Pritikin, Dean Ornish, Eat Right for your blood type...) by comparing it to Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide. Is the diet varied and balanced, as recommended in Canada's Food Guide? Does it provide the number of Food Guide Servings recommended for your age? Prepare a summary report for your class.
- Organize a multicultural day lunch (in the classroom, on a picnic) with a focus on balance (at least 3 out of 4 food groups) and variety. This is a great opportunity to taste new foods.

Tip: Use [BC's Food Mosaic](#) (available from BC Dairy Association) for classifying multicultural foods into the four food groups.

- Join the nutrition committee at your school and advocate for better food and beverage choices in cafeterias, vending machines and at fundraising events.

Tip: Visit [Healthy Eating at School](#) for ideas on how to do so.

- Keep track of your physical and emotional well-being in a journal while making changes to improve your eating habits.
- Plan a restaurant menu—see the following for instructions
- Check out the [Worldly Restaurants](#) lesson plan



How Well Do You Think You Eat?

(Grade 6 to 12)

More information for Teachers

To offset food costs, find out about [mini food grants](#).

Refer to [Kitchen Equipment for your Classroom](#) for more preparation and food safety tips.

Curriculum Links

- Grades 6-9: This lesson supports the Big Ideas and Learning Standards in Physical and Health Education [BC curriculum](#) and can also link to other subject areas.
- Grades 10-12: This lesson supports Big Ideas, Competencies and Content in Applied Design, Skills and Technology, Physical and Health Education and other [curriculum areas](#).

Want to do more nutrition education with your class?

Explore our other [lesson plans](#) or book a [free 1-hour workshop](#).

How Well Do You Think You Eat?

Teacher Backgrounder

Eating Well With Canada's Food Guide Teaching Tips

About Food Groups

There are four food groups in Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide:

- Vegetables & Fruit
- Grain Products
- Milk and Alternatives
- Meat and Alternatives

To achieve nutrition balance, choose foods from 3-4 food groups at each meal.

Canada's Food Guide recommends limiting foods and beverages high in calories, fat, sugar or salt (sodium) such as cakes and pastries, chocolate and candies, cookies and granola bars, doughnuts and muffins, ice cream and frozen desserts, french fries, potato chips, nachos and other salty snacks, alcohol, fruit flavoured drinks, soft drinks, sports and energy drinks, and sweetened hot or cold drinks.

www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide

About Food Guide Servings

Vegetables & Fruit

One medium-size vegetable or fruit, a small bowl of cut-up vegetables or fruit, a large bowl of salad, and a small glass of juice are each examples of 1 Food Guide Serving.

Note the number of Food Guide Servings recommended per day for Vegetables & Fruit.

Teens 14–18		Adults 19–50		Adults 51+	
Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
7	8	7–8	8–10	7	7

We often have helpings of Vegetables & Fruit that count as more than one Food Guide Serving. For example, a large baked potato would count as 2 Food Guide Servings. Have the participants think of other examples that would count as 2 Food Guide Servings of Vegetables & Fruit (large banana, whole grapefruit, or small bowl of dried fruit).

How Well Do You Think You Eat?

Teacher Backgrounder

Grain Products

Common examples of 1 Food Guide Serving from this group are 1 slice of bread or a bowl of cereal.

Note the number of Food Guide Servings recommended per day for Grain Products.

Teens 14–18		Adults 19–50		Adults 51+	
Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
6	7	6–7	8	6	7

We often take helpings of Grain Products that are more than 1 Food Guide Serving. A bowl of rice, a plate of pasta or a muffin are often 2 or more Food Guide Servings.

Have the participants think of other examples of Grain Products not pictured in the poster and encourage them to figure out how many Food Guide Servings their examples would be. Be prepared to turn the questions back to the participants so they can practice problem solving.

For example Participant: I had a tortilla, how many Food Guide Servings is that?

Teacher: Compare the tortilla to the slice of bread. How does it compare? How many Food Guide Servings do you think it would be? (Only the person who saw it would know.)

Milk & Alternatives

Common examples of 1 Food Guide Serving include a large glass of milk, a few slices from a block of cheese, or a small container of yogurt. Compare the size of 1 Food Guide Serving of milk to 1 Food Guide Serving of juice. Notice the difference?

Note the number of Food Guide Servings recommended per day for Milk & Alternatives.

Teens 14–18		Adults 19–50		Adults 51+	
Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
3–4	3–4	2	2	3	3

We often eat portions that are only ½ Food Guide Serving in this food group.

How Well Do You Think You Eat?

Teacher Backgrounder

For example Participant: Does the milk I put in my coffee or tea count?

Teacher: Picture how much milk you put in your coffee or tea, and add up all the milk you had in a day. How does it add up? (NOTE: 8 milk portions of 15 mL each add up to ½ Milk & Alternatives serving.)

Meat & Alternatives

A Food Guide Serving of this food group takes many forms. A medium-size bowl of beans, medium-size hamburger patty, 2 eggs or a large spoonful of peanut butter are all examples of one serving.

Teen and adult females need 2 Food Guide Servings per day, while males need 3.

Eating Habits of Canadian Adolescents

Students need to eat well in order to grow and develop, keep their immune system strong, improve their ability to concentrate, and increase their energy and vitality. But many students are not making healthy choices. Consider these statistics:

- Fifty-five percent of Grade 10 students, particularly girls, tend to skip breakfast.¹
- Nearly half of all teenage girls do not eat the minimum number of servings from any of the four food groups.²
- More than half of all teenage boys do not eat the minimum number of servings of vegetables and fruit or milk products.²
- Twenty-five percent of all calories consumed by teens come from non-food group foods, which includes high fat, sugary and/or salty foods.²
- About half of Grade 10 girls in BC indicate they are on a diet or think they need to lose weight.³
- The rate of overweight students aged 12 to 17 rose to 29 percent from 14 percent over the past 25 years; this includes an increase in obesity from 3 percent to 9 percent.⁴

Research shows that students who eat breakfast make more healthy food choices and have more healthy eating habits overall.⁵ They have increased test scores, improved attendance, reduced tardiness, and better academic, behavioural and emotional functioning.⁶

How Well Do You Think You Eat?

On the other hand, students who skip breakfast tend to miss other meals as well, which makes matters worse.⁵ They score much lower on tests of vocabulary, reading comprehension, arithmetic and general knowledge.⁷ They are also more susceptible to illness and more likely to be absent.⁸ Poorly nourished students are also more likely to be suspended and to have difficulty interacting with their peers.⁹

Students consistently report that the lack of availability of affordable, healthy foods at school and the convenience of fast foods are major barriers to healthy eating.^{10,11,12}

1. "Young People In Canada: Their Health and Well Being", Chapter 7, William Boyce, Public Health Agency of Canada-Division of Childhood and Adolescence, 2004.
2. "Food Habits of Canadians: Food Sources of Nutrients for the Adolescent Sample". Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research, Phillips S, Jacobs Starkey L and Gray-Donald K., 65 (2): 81-84, Summer 2004.
3. Young People In Canada: Their Health and Well Being, Chapter 7, William Boyce, Public Health Agency of Canada - Division of Childhood and Adolescence, 2004.
4. Canadian Community Health Survey: Obesity among children and adults", 2004.
5. "Nutritional Status, Body Weight, and Academic Performance in Children and Adolescents". Journal of the American Dietetic Association, Rampersaud GC, Pereira MA, Girard BL, Adams J, Metz J. Breakfast Habits, 105:743-760, 2005.
6. "Diet, breakfast and academic performance in children". Annals of Nutrition and Metabolism, Kleinman RE, Hall S, Green H, Korzec-Ramirez D, Patton K, Pagano ME, Murphy JM, 46 Supp 1: 24-30, 2002.
7. "Brief fasting, stress, and cognition in children". American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, Pollitt E, Leibel R, Greenfield D, 34: 1526-1533, 1991.
8. Statement on the Link between Nutrition and Cognitive Development in Children. Center on Hunger, Poverty, and Nutrition Policy, Medford, MA: Tufts University School of Nutrition, 1998.
9. "Food insufficiency and American school-aged children's cognitive, academic, and psychosocial development". Pediatrics, Alaimo K, Olson C, Frongillo E, 108: 44-53, 2001.
10. "Barriers and Enablers to Healthy Eating and Active Living in Children: Key Findings in 6 Nova Scotia Communities". Canadian Diabetes Association, December 2002.

How Well Do You Think You Eat?

11. "Why do kids eat healthful food? Perceived benefits and barriers to healthful eating and physical activity among children and adolescents". Journal of the American Dietetic Association, O'Dea J., 103 (4):497-501, April 2003.
12. Individual and environmental influences on adolescent eating behaviors". Journal of the American Dietetic Association, Story M, Neumark-Sztainer D, French S., 102(3 Suppl): S40-51, March 2002.