

# Dear Educator,

Back-to-school is a great time to talk about making choices that will help lead to lifelong health-promoting habits. One important way to help your students make a habit of healthy living is to remind them to choose balanced meals rich in lean protein, vitamins, and minerals based on USDA MyPlate dietary guidelines. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have found evidence linking healthy eating and physical activity with academic achievement.<sup>1</sup>

This free educational program, **Balanced Choices for Healthy Habits**, will help you reinforce the importance of making balanced food choices to help kids succeed in their mental and physical tasks. Created by the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired (YMI) in cooperation with the National Pork Board, the program is the latest addition to the library of classroom resources at [ymiclassroom.com/pork](http://ymiclassroom.com/pork). In this lesson, students learn about the role nutrient-rich protein plays in building strong muscles, and use the USDA MyPlate guidelines to help them create balanced, flavorful meals.

Please share this program with additional Family and Consumer Science teachers and other teachers in your school, as well as your food service director, school nurse, coaches, counselors, and health teachers. Although the materials are copyrighted, you may make as many copies as you need for your students. Also, please visit [ymiclassroom.com/feedback-pork](http://ymiclassroom.com/feedback-pork) to let us know your thoughts on this program.

And be sure to look for more interactive lessons from YMI and the National Pork Board in the fall, including a fun whiteboard activity that takes students on a virtual field trip to learn about responsible farming and lessons on food production.

Sincerely,



Dr. Dominic Kinsley  
Editor in Chief  
Young Minds Inspired

<sup>1</sup> [cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health\\_and\\_academics/pdf/health-academic-achievement.pdf](http://cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/health-academic-achievement.pdf)



# Balanced Choices for Healthy Habits

## Target Audience

Students in middle and high school Family and Consumer Science classes

## Program Objectives

- Raise awareness of the value of pork as a leading source of protein worldwide
- Engage students in establishing lifelong health goals based on MyPlate nutritional guidelines
- Explore how pork farmers practice sustainability and animal care

## How to Use This Program

Make copies of this teacher's guide and the activity sheet. Prepare the materials for the activity in advance.

This program meets the following Family and Consumer Science Standards:<sup>2</sup>

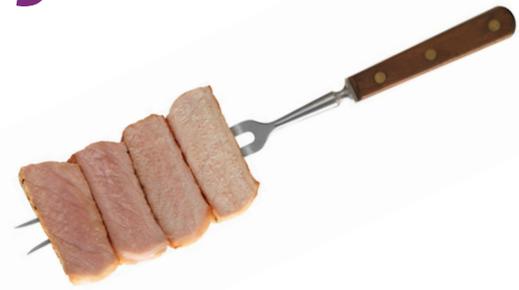
- 9.3 Evaluate nutrition principles, food plans, preparation techniques and specialized dietary plans.
- 9.3.2 Analyze nutritional data
- 9.3.6 Critique the selection of foods to promote a healthy lifestyle

## Teaching *Balanced Choices for Healthy Habits*

**Materials needed:** Activity sheet, paper, access to the internet

Ask students to share their favorite activities that help them stay at the top of their game physically and mentally. How much consideration do they give to the food they eat to fuel their performance? Point out that it's important for *everyone* to exercise, get enough sleep, and make balanced food choices, especially during the teen years when a lot of physical growth takes place. That's exactly when teens start to become so busy that they may skip meals or make less nutritious choices on the run instead of supporting their bodies with the nutrition they need. Both their physical and emotional health can be negatively affected as a result, so helping them know they can make tasty, nutritious choices, even on the busiest of days, can inspire better decisions in support of their health goals.

Divide students into small groups to discuss and write down some of their typical meals over the past week, as well as some of their favorite food choices. How do they define "nutrient-rich?" Which foods do they rely on for their protein, vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients? As groups are compiling their lists, distribute the activity sheet and direct them to read Part 1 about the USDA MyPlate guidelines. Ask them to evaluate their choices in relation to MyPlate, keeping in mind that protein is an important food group as part of creating a balanced meal. Remind them that protein is vital for building bones and muscles, and pork is a globally important source of



protein. Now have groups share their results aloud. How balanced do they think their choices were?

Next, have students complete Part 2 of the sheet, which asks them to think about the protein portion of their meal, and Part 3, which completes the meal planning strategy by having them create a balanced meal including pork, using information about cuts of pork found at [pork.org/cooking/cuts](http://pork.org/cooking/cuts) and information at [pork.org/cooking/pork-nutrition](http://pork.org/cooking/pork-nutrition). Share with students that in addition to protein, a 3-ounce serving of pork is nutrient-rich, providing thiamin, selenium, niacin, vitamin B-6, phosphorus, zinc, and riboflavin. Pork is also naturally low in sodium and provides potassium, which are important for heart health and blood pressure as part of a balanced diet. Modify the meal-planning guidelines in Part 3 as needed for students with dietary restrictions that do not include pork, such as allergies or cultural reasons.

Finally, ask students to "post their plate" in the style of a social media post by describing their meal in a 140-character sentence that encourages others to try it. You might create a bulletin board display featuring the posts, where students can gain inspiration from other students' ideas.

**Answers, Part 2:** 1. b; 2. d; 3. e; 4. c; 5. a; 6. f. Explain to students that while many foods outside the protein group may also contain protein, the foods within the actual protein group are grouped together because of their protein content. It is important to eat foods from all five food groups for balanced meals.

## Resources

- National Pork Board: [pork.org](http://pork.org)
- National Pork Board Linked In: [linkedin.com/company/national-pork-board](http://linkedin.com/company/national-pork-board)
- Health and Academic Achievement: [cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health\\_and\\_academics/pdf/health-academic-achievement.pdf](http://cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/health-academic-achievement.pdf)
- "Teens, Your Brain Needs Real Food": [health.usnews.com/health-news/health-wellness/articles/2016-01-05/teens-your-brain-needs-real-food](http://health.usnews.com/health-news/health-wellness/articles/2016-01-05/teens-your-brain-needs-real-food)
- MyPlate: [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov)
- Pork Cuts: [pork.org/cooking/cuts](http://pork.org/cooking/cuts)
- Pork Nutrition: [pork.org/cooking/pork-nutrition](http://pork.org/cooking/pork-nutrition)
- Pork Recipes: [yummy.com/page/pork](http://yummy.com/page/pork)
- Lessons: [ymiclassroom.com/pork](http://ymiclassroom.com/pork)

<sup>2</sup> [nasafacs.org/national-standards-and-competencies.html](http://nasafacs.org/national-standards-and-competencies.html)

# Balanced Choices for Healthy Habits

## Part 1: Check Your Choices

MyPlate is a guide provided by the USDA and based on the dietary guidelines for following a balanced diet that includes the essential elements needed for good nutrition. This includes choosing food and beverages from all five food groups to get the nutrients you need: fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, and dairy. To build a balanced eating style, MyPlate suggests: Make half your plate fruits and vegetables, make half of your grains whole grains, go for low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt, and vary your proteins. Also, choose options with less saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars. The total amount you need each day depends on your age, gender, and level of physical activity. Recommended daily amounts for kids ages 9 to 18 include the following ranges:\*

- Fruits — 1½ to 2 cups
- Vegetables — 2 to 3 cups
- Grains — 5- to 8-ounce equivalents
- Protein — 5- to 6½-ounce equivalents
- Dairy — 3 cups

Working with your group, identify examples of typical meals you each had recently. How did the meals measure up to MyPlate standards? Check out [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov) for more detail.

## Part 2: Protein Power

Protein is present throughout your entire body. It provides the building blocks for bones, muscles, cartilage, blood, and skin, as well as enzymes, hormones, and vitamins. Protein also provides the body with calories.\*\* As part of a balanced diet and regular exercise, protein and vitamins work together to make your body strong. This makes choosing the protein portion of your MyPlate meal extremely important.

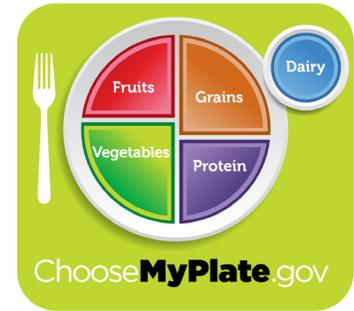
Protein can be found in a wide variety of foods—even foods that belong to other food groups—but the amount of protein can vary. Look at common portions of each food below. Match it to the amount of protein you think it provides.

1. ___ 3 ounces of pork loin (3 oz-equivalent)	a. 7.11 grams
2. ___ 1 cup of chopped broccoli (cooked or raw)	b. 24 grams
3. ___ 1/2 cup of cooked black beans (2 oz-equivalent)	c. 10 grams
4. ___ 8 ounces of lowfat milk	d. 2 grams
5. ___ 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (2 oz-equivalent)	e. 8 grams
6. ___ 1 egg	f. 6.24 grams

Did you know? Pork is a nutrient-rich and versatile protein, providing a perfect foundation for a MyPlate meal because it goes well with other food groups, is affordable, and easy to prepare.

## Part 3: Get Social

Now, plan a lean meal around pork protein, following the MyPlate guidelines and choosing from the cuts of pork found at [pork.org/cooking/cuts/](http://pork.org/cooking/cuts/) or information at [pork.org/cooking/pork-nutrition](http://pork.org/cooking/pork-nutrition). On the back of this sheet or on a separate piece of paper, draw and style your meal in the manner of a social media post and describe it in a 140-character sentence. Use your most persuasive wording to attract readers to your choice.



\*[choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/WhatIsMyPlate](http://choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/WhatIsMyPlate)  
 \*\*[choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/protein-foods/protein-foods-nutrients-health](http://choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/protein-foods/protein-foods-nutrients-health)

