

# Family Meal

## Early Childhood Health Lesson

**Objective:** Learn the importance of working together to create a healthy, affordable, and easy to make meal.



### **WE CAN! MESSAGES**

Increase availability and accessibility of healthy foods in the home.

Control portion sizes.

Limit intake of high-fat and high-calorie foods that are low in nutrients.

Limit the availability and accessibility of sugar-sweetened beverages.

Limit the availability and accessibility of high-fat, high-calorie/low nutrient foods in the home.

### **NATIONAL PRE-K–2ND GRADE HEALTH PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

Identify how the family influences personal health practices and behaviors.

### **ADULT MESSAGE**

Positive family eating habits can influence a child’s cognitive, social, emotional, and physical well-being.

### **DEVELOPING PRESCHOOL READINESS SKILLS**

Developing listening skills, learning to follow directions, and building language through social and group interaction.

### **PROGRAM CONTENT**

Themed lesson plans incorporating art, literacy, movement and music support a multi-disciplinary approach to teaching young children and adults.

**Program Length:** 70 minutes

### **INTRODUCTION/DISCUSSION**

**Materials:** Name stickers, markers

Welcome families with name stickers and “hello” song. Ask families how often they eat together. Lead a discussion around the challenges, benefits, and the importance of sharing family meals. Encourage and provide strategies for adults to engage children in the preparation and responsibilities surrounding family meals. Use this as an opportunity to review and summarize the health messages we have covered so far (foods with multiple colors and textures, inclusion of fruits and vegetables in every meal, calcium-rich foods and beverages, portion plate template, water consumption, and washing hands). Allow time for families to share their own mealtime challenges and strategies.

**Visual References:** Pictures of families from all over the world preparing meals and eating together.

## Key Teaching Messages

- Social settings, especially family settings, have a powerful influence on child's behaviors and habits.
- Home cooking can be more nutritious than fast food and take-out options—and cheaper!
- Family meals are beneficial for a child's emotional, physical, and mental development.

## ART ACTIVITY: PERSONALIZED PLACEMAT AND PERSONALIZED CHEF'S APRON

Children and adults will each create their own unique placemat that will serve as a creative and positive reinforcement for sharing family meals. Children will create their own chef's apron.

**Materials:** For Placemat: Oak tag, pictures of healthy foods, alphabet letters, glue sticks, markers, and laminator (or plastic sleeves). Recycled health and fitness magazines. For Chef's Apron: apron, colored markers, or fabric markers.

**Set-up:** Placemat Activity: Place two pieces of tape to each end of the oak tag. Place one piece of oak tag paper at each seat. Place one glue stick at each seat. You might have to demonstrate how to remove the top of the glue stick and how to move it up and down. Separate the pictures and alphabet letters on the table into separate piles. Make sure that all children at the table can reach the materials. Hand out child-safe scissors to the grown-ups at the table. Adults can help the children cut images out of the magazines. When the children are finished with their placemats, remove the tape from the oak tag. Use a marker to write the child's name on the back of the placemat.

**Option 1:** Have the laminator set up at a different table. Make sure the laminator is on and is hot. NOTE: DON'T LET THE CHILDREN HELP WITH LAMINATING. THE LAMINATOR GETS EXTREMELY HOT! They can watch. Place the oak tag paper placemat in a clear laminator sheet, then into the cardboard laminator protector and feed it through the laminator. When it comes out, check to make sure the placemat has been properly laminated. If not, feed it through the laminator again. When the placemat is completely laminated, place on the table to cool off.

**Option 2:** Collect all placemats and laminate off-site and return to families.

**Option 3:** Use plastic jacket sleeves.

**Set-up:** Apron Activity: Provide each child with an apron and markers.

**Clean-up:** Give children a 5 minute warning. Always let children know that you will be transitioning and ending the project soon. After the warning, sing a clean-up song to focus children and encourage participation in the clean-up process. One example: "Clean up, clean up, one, two, three. I'll help you and you help me. Clean up, clean up, one, two, three. I'll help you and you help me."

## COOKING DEMONSTRATION

Chef or cooking expert will lead a hands-on, creative cooking demonstration that engages both parent and child in creating a healthy balanced meal. Check out these recipes for ideas. Keep the Beat: Deliciously Healthy Eating website: <http://healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov/>

Encourage children to wash hands with soap and warm water before eating snack. **Hand Washing Strategy:** Wash hands for 20 seconds to fight off all germs and then rinse well under running water. Sing the ABC Song while you wash.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: MOVEMENT/MUSIC

**Weekly Structure:** Warm-up, Active Play Time, Movement/Music (song/activity), Cool-down. Children should do at least 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of physical activity each day.

### Warm-up:

#### Marching Movement Song

We're marching, marching, marching  
We're marching in a circle  
We're marching, marching, marching until it's time to stop!

We're jumping, jumping, jumping  
We're jumping in a circle,  
We're jumping, jumping, jumping until it's time to stop!  
(add hopping, stomping, running, tiptoeing, etc.)

#### In and Out Circle Song

Let's go in and in and in  
And out and out and out  
And in and in and in and in  
And out and out and out!



### Active Play Time:

Do 5 or 10 minutes of each exercise

- Playing Tag
- Hopscotch
- Jumping Jacks
- Jumping (one foot, together then apart, front to back)

### Movement/Music:

**Songs** – Row, Row, Row Your Boat and Grand Old Duke of York

**Roller Coaster** – Have the adult sit with their legs straight out. Have the child sit in between the adult's legs. Now, pretend you are on a roller coaster. As the roller coaster goes up the parent and child lean back. As the roller coaster goes down the pair lean forward and scream. Then lean left and right as the roller coaster turns.

**Train** – Have the adult sit with their legs straight out. Have the child sit in between the adult's legs. As the train takes off the pair moves their arms like the train wheels rolling. Make noises of the train and hear the whistle blow!

### Cool-down:

It is important for the body to cool down gradually.

- Breathing–Place hands on belly or lower back. Inhale and fill the lungs. Feel the abdomen and ribs inflate. Exhale and empty the lungs. Feel the chest and abdomen relax.
- Yoga Moves
  - Downward Dog–Have the children make a bridge with their bodies. From here you can kick one leg up at a time and start to stretch body long.
  - Tree Pose–Have the children balance on one leg, bending their other leg at a 90 degree angle, stretching their hands above their heads.
  - The Horse–Stand in place for 30 seconds with a wide stance and knees bent (like a halfway down squat position).

## GROUP STORYTIME

*Don't Let the Peas Touch* by Deborah Blumenthal

*Gregory, the Terrible Eater* by Mitchell Sharmat

*The Berenstain Bears Forget Their Manners* by Stan Berenstain and Jan Berenstain

## REVIEW FAMILY HANDOUT

**Goal:** Have two or more family-style meals together this week.

**Fact of the Week:** Children are more likely to try new foods when they are eating with their family.

### At-Home Strategies:

- Have all family members contribute to the meal so that responsibilities are shared.
- Introduce children to new healthy foods and act as a role model for healthy eating.
- For conversation, share “best” and “worst” moments of the day.
- Make eating together a routine and make it a family commitment.
- Planning meals and using a shopping list helps save money and time!

## LESSON VISUALS

- MyPlate

