Activity Plan #1 (children and adults):
Benefits of Eating Well and Being Physically Active

Purpose
This activity plan is part of a series that supports the Eat Well and Be Active Every Day poster. It is designed to help intermediaries educate children and adults about key healthy eating and physical activity messages and encourages individuals to take action to maintain and improve their health.

Educators are encouraged to use the activity plans with a group according to the suggested sequence, as some concepts in the series build on each other. However, educators should adapt suggested activities and sequence to meet the needs of their group.

Topic
This activity plan:
• Provides a forum to discuss the benefits of eating well and being physically active every day.
• Introduces Canada’s Food Guide and Canada’s Physical Activity Guides.

Background
Eating well and being physically active every day go hand-in-hand to improve physical and mental health and vitality. Following Canada’s Food Guide and Canada’s Physical Activity Guides will help Canadians reduce their risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, certain types of cancer, osteoporosis, high blood pressure and depression.

Incorporating healthy eating and physical activity into everyday living helps individuals achieve and maintain a healthy body weight and image, improves energy, promotes growth and development, increases and maintains bone and muscle strength, and prolongs independence during old age.

Canada’s Food Guide defines and promotes healthy eating for Canadians. The Food Guide encourages people to choose a variety of foods from each of the four food groups – Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, and Meat and Alternatives – and to include a specific amount and type of oils and fats.

Canada’s Physical Activity Guides help Canadians make wise choices about physical activity. The Guides recommend adults accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily (at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity for children and youth), and choose a variety of activities from each of the following three activity groups – Endurance, Flexibility and Strength, with an emphasis on Endurance activities.

For more information on this topic see suggested readings.

Educator Tip: These suggested readings are strongly recommended to help you prepare for this activity plan.

www.health.gc.ca/eatwell-beactive
Learning Objectives

After completing the activities below, participants will be able to:

1. List benefits or reasons for eating well and being physically active.
2. List the four food groups according to Canada’s Food Guide.
3. List the three activity groups according to Canada’s Physical Activity Guides.
4. List a variety of examples of foods from each of the four food groups in Canada’s Food Guide.
5. List a variety of examples of activities from each of the three activity groups in Canada’s Physical Activity Guides.
6. Reflect on their own eating and physical activity habits.

You will need

Required

• One Eat Well and Be Active Every Day poster.
• Copies of Canada’s Food Guide and Canada’s Physical Activity Guides (children, youth, adults and/or older adults) for each participant.
• Eat Well and Be Active images as handouts for participants (at least one image per participant).
• Blank paper and pen for each participant.

Optional

• Ready-to-Use Presentation for Consumers on Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide Slides 1, 2, 4, 5
Activities

Activities for Children

Benefits: Ask the children to look at the images on the Eat Well and Be Active Every Day poster. Brainstorm how they think the people in the images are feeling. For example: happy, healthy, friendly, energized, etc. Discuss what sorts of activities the people are doing in the images that would make them feel this way. From this discussion, build a list of benefits or reasons for eating well and being active.

The Four Food Groups and Three Activity Groups: Give a copy of Canada’s Food Guide and Canada’s Physical Activity Guide (children or youth) to each participant. Introduce the Guides by reviewing the names of the food groups and the physical activity groups. Brainstorm what types of foods and what types of activities fit into each group.

Using the Eat Well and Be Active Every Day poster, ask the children to identify the four images that represent the four food groups in Canada’s Food Guide. Build on this discussion by asking the children to find any three images that illustrate the three activity groups according to Canada’s Physical Activity Guide.

Select several Eat Well and Be Active images to provide as handouts to each participant. Choose images that you think would build good discussions within your group. Give each participant one image. Ask the children to share what they think their image is meant to portray – what healthy eating and/or physical activity message is being illustrated in the image?

KEY MESSAGE: Canada’s Food Guide and Canada’s Physical Activity Guides can help you make healthy lifestyle choices.
My Foods and Activities: Ask participants to list or draw foods and physical activities that they have tried and enjoyed from the four food groups and the three physical activity groups. You may wish to ask participants to draw one rainbow for sorting foods according to Canada’s Food Guide and one rainbow for sorting physical activities according to Canada’s Physical Activity Guide.

Key Message: There are many healthy and enjoyable foods and physical activities to choose from.

Personal Reflection: Using Canada’s Food Guide and Canada’s Physical Activity Guide, have the participants circle the items on this list that they eat or do frequently and ask them if they notice any patterns. For example, does it appear they eat a lot from one food group and not much from another? Does it appear they are not doing many or any endurance activities frequently? (Overcoming barriers is explored in Activity Plan #3)

Brainstorm factors that affect food and physical activity choices (example: personal preference, hunger level, time of day, weather, etc.)

To close the session, ask participants to try one of the foods and physical activities that they have not circled or not tried recently – see Canada’s Food Guide and Canada’s Physical Activity Guide for ideas. If possible, have participants report back on their experience in a subsequent session. What food and physical activity did they try? Why did they choose those? Ask them to describe their experience.

Key Message: Choose a variety of healthy and enjoyable foods and physical activities from the different groups.
Activities for Adults

SUGGESTED ICEBREAKER: Ask participants to bring a photo or other memento that symbolizes why eating well and being physically active is important to them. Have participants share with the group. Create a collage or list of reasons and benefits of eating well and being physically active.

Benefits: Ask each participant to interview another participant on a new or interesting healthy eating and physical activity experience (e.g., a new food or interesting physical activity they have recently tried). Share these experiences with the group – why was it a good experience? What elements made it a good experience? List these experiences on a blackboard/flipchart as a list of benefits of eating well and being physically active.

KEY MESSAGE: There are many benefits of eating well and being physically active - like fighting disease, having more energy, and maintaining independence as we get older.

The Four Food Groups and Three Physical Activity Groups: Give a copy of Canada’s Food Guide and Canada’s Physical Activity Guide (adults or older adults) to each participant. Introduce the Guides by reviewing the names of the food groups and the physical activity groups. Brainstorm what types of foods and what types of activities fit into each group.

Using the Eat Well and Be Active Every Day poster, ask the participants to identify the four images that represent the four food groups in Canada’s Food Guide. Build on this discussion by asking the participants to find any three images that illustrate the three activity groups according to Canada’s Physical Activity Guide.

Select several Eat Well and Be Active images to provide as handouts to each participant. Choose images that you think would build good discussions within your group. Give each participant one or more image(s). Ask the participants to share what they think their image(s) is meant to portray – what healthy eating and/or physical activity message is being illustrated in the image? Ask participants to share a healthy eating and/or physical activity story that relates to the image they have been given.
Personal Reflection: This activity will help participants reflect on their current eating and physical activity habits. Using Canada’s Food Guide and Canada’s Physical Activity Guide, ask the participants to circle the items on the Guides that they eat or do frequently and ask them if they notice any emerging patterns. For example, does it appear they eat a lot of one food group and not much from another? Does it appear they are not doing many or any endurance activities frequently? Do most or all of the physical activities they do come from just one of the activity groups? Discuss as a group.

Group Reflection: List some barriers that prevent people from eating well and being physically active. As a group, begin to brainstorm some possible solutions to help overcome those barriers. Discuss how the healthier choice can become the easier choice. For example, placing a bowl of apples, pears or other in-season fruit on the kitchen counter or dining table can make it easier to grab fruit for a quick snack, instead of cookies or doughnuts. Or choosing to walk, wheel or cycle for short trips can be faster than taking the car, and easier on gas! This will help participants reflect on how healthy eating and physical activity can fit into their lives and will set the stage for future discussions on goal setting.

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Supplementary Activities

Adults

Try a new food and physical activity this week; get inspiration from Canada’s Food Guide and Canada’s Physical Activity Guide. If possible, have participants report back on their experience. What food and physical activity did they try? Why did they choose those? Ask participants to describe their experience.

KEY MESSAGE: Choose a variety of healthy and enjoyable foods and physical activities from the different groups.

Related Eat Well and Be Active Images
Suggested Readings

Healthy Eating

• Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide
• Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide – A Resource for Educators and Communicators (Sections 1 to 4)
• Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide – First Nations, Inuit and Métis

Physical Activity

Children and Youth

• Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living for Children
• Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living for Youth

Adults and Older Adults

• Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living
  ~ Handbook for Canada’s Physical Activity Guide for Healthy Active Living (p.4 to 7)
• Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living for Older Adults
  ~ Handbook for Canada’s Physical Activity Guide for Healthy Active Living for Older Adults (p.2 to 4 and 6)