

## What's on Your Plate ?



## Meeting My Plate Goals on a Budget

### Sources:

[www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

USDA: *Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children*

Food and Nutrition Information Center

National Food Service Management Institute *Care Connection*

Cornell University Food and Brand Lab

My Plate 10 Tips Educational Series

## Eat healthy on a budget?

You are not alone if you think it costs too much to eat healthy foods on a budget. Added to that, children often don't want to eat the foods that are healthy for them, you may feel that you are throwing away money!

The good news is that it truly can be affordable and easy to serve healthy foods recommended by MyPlate and required of you as a Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) participant. Studies have shown that serving fruits and vegetables for snack can actually save you money! Snack-size portions of produce can cost about 2 cents less on average than snack-size portions of foods like crackers.

MyPlate shows you the five food groups that are the building blocks of a healthy diet using a familiar image of a place setting for a meal. Before we eat, we are all encouraged to think about what goes on our plates, bowls, cups, and glasses. This training will help you fill your plates with healthy foods without breaking the bank!



### VEGETABLES Vary your veggies!

Potassium is an important nutrient most Americans' diets lack! Potatoes are the largest, most affordable source of potassium in the produce department.

### FRUITS Focus on fruits!

Color your plate! Fill with red, yellow, orange, blue, and purple fruits. Use fresh in season. Massachusetts has pick-your-own farms in every region of the state.



### GRAINS Make at least half your grains whole.

Just because bread is brown and the package says "wheat bread" doesn't mean it's whole grain. Read the ingredient list to make sure the first word is "whole".

### PROTEIN Go lean with protein.

Prepare baked, broiled, or grilled. Mix it up! Dry beans, peas and eggs are all great sources of protein!



### DAIRY Get your calcium-rich foods.

Serve milk at breakfast/lunch/supper that is 1% low-fat or skim to children over age 2. Look for yogurts low in fat and sugar. Choose cheese lower in fat and sodium.

## Build a Healthy Plate with Vegetables

A plan to buy vegetables in all forms will save you money. Fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables are all nutritious. In fact, canned and frozen produce is typically picked, packed, canned/frozen at its peak, which is great for nutrient content. Remember:

- ⇒ Buy fresh vegetables when in season! It will cost less and taste better than out-of-season produce that has been shipped a long distance.
- ⇒ Buy canned or frozen vegetables any time of year. Look for veggies that have no sauce or salt added.

The USDA estimates that if you purchase vegetables fresh in season, canned and frozen, you will get about 3 more servings than if you purchase only fresh. That makes your food dollars go farther.

### The big question: How can I encourage children to eat vegetables?

It takes time for new foods to be accepted. Here are some ideas for ways to get children excited about vegetables.

- 👍 Let children pick out the vegetables on a field trip to the supermarket or farmers' market.
- 👍 Have children help prepare vegetables, such as scrubbing potatoes or tearing lettuce leaves.
- 👍 Have a vegetable tasting day. Encourage each family to bring a unique vegetable to your program. Spend time looking at color, shape, and texture. Then have a real taste test...and remember that tasting is not eating. Make very small samples.
- 👍 Make it fun. Serve vegetable sticks with a creditable dip such as yogurt or hummus for snack.



### We all love potatoes!

At about 19 cents per serving, potatoes are the largest and most affordable source of potassium in the produce department. Even better, they are fast and easy to cook in the microwave. 2 ideas:

- 😊 **Classic “Baked” potatoes:** scrub 6 potatoes. Cut a thin wedge out of each potato about an inch deep to allow steam to vent. Place on a microwave safe dish and cook on high 10-12 minutes. Using oven mitts, remove the hot dish. Carefully make the slit larger and fluff with a fork. Serve with your favorite toppings, such as salsa.
- 😊 **Microwave “Roasted” potatoes:** Scrub 6 small potatoes and cut into 1 inch cubes. Place in a microwave safe dish and drizzle with 1-2 tablespoons olive oil. Sprinkle with herbs or seasoning of your choice, such as thyme, rosemary, paprika, and toss to coat. Cover (if using plastic wrap, poke a small hole in the plastic to vent) and cook for 10-12 minutes. Using an oven mitt, remove the hot dish and serve.

*Makes approximately 6 1/2 cup servings for a 3-5 year old at snack .*

## Build a Healthy Plate with Fruits

The same cost saving tip holds true with fruits as with vegetables, plan your fruit purchases to include fresh, frozen, and canned. Remember:

- ⇒ Buy fresh fruits when in season. It's hard to wait for summer berries, but you will always save money and get the tastiest fresh fruit when it's locally fresh.
- ⇒ Buy frozen fruit without added sugar and canned fruit packed in water. Fruits are sweet enough all on their own.

All fruits provide similar nutrients to vegetables. Fruits are naturally sweet and when eaten whole, not as fruit juice, contain a good source of fiber.



### **A smaller question (maybe): How can I encourage children to eat fruits?**

- 👍 Keep fruits visible! Have a bowl of fruit on the table or counter.
- 👍 Fruits make great snacks...many come in their own "package"
- 👍 Experiment with fruits as part of dinner. Add to a salad along with veggies for a sweet surprise.
- 👍 Have a fruit tasting day. We all get into a rut with our favorites. Fruits, just like vegetables provide a great opportunity to examine color, shape and texture.

### **Have fun with fruit**

Even on a budget, you can make fun fruit part of your day. Many children love to eat anything on a stick. Think about some of these ideas:

- 😊 Rainbow fruit kabobs are great in the summer....you can usually get all the colors in seasonal fruits.
- 😊 Have children make fruit and yogurt parfaits for snack. This is an easy activity that can involve all ages. Use any fruit you have, good for using up small amounts from other menus. Works for frozen and canned fruits well.
- 😊 Make a 2 component snack kabob by using fruit and cheese. Remember, you can use not only kabob sticks and toothpicks, but also thin straws for younger children for safety.
- 😊 When you save money buying in bulk...have a plan for using it all. It's not a bargain if you end up tossing any. Very ripe fruits are great to use in baking.
- 😊 Think of fruit as your best dessert. Have you ever poached pears, baked apples...or sautéed bananas!? Try grilling some pineapple or peaches....yum!

## Build a Healthy Plate with Grains

Make half your grains a whole grain product. This may mean reading labels, but getting whole grains in your diet doesn't have to cost more. In fact, many of your favorite grains are available as whole grains for the same price as refined grain products. Another bonus is the extra fiber in whole grains can keep you full longer!

- ⇒ For breads, look for the words “whole” in the ingredient list. Color doesn't mean anything.
- ⇒ Buy the whole grain version of foods already eaten. Brown rice instead of white. You can start by mixing brown rice and white rice together and slowly moving to all brown rice to get everyone used to the change.

### But will children (or adults) eat whole grains?

It takes time for some to accept whole grain foods instead of the refined product. Some foods are already favorites as whole grain, such as oatmeal.

- 👍 Mix it up. Try mixing whole grain and refined products like rice and pasta. Make a sandwich with whole wheat bread on one side and white bread on the other.
- 👍 Have a whole grain taste test. Rate whole grain version of crackers, cereals, and other child favorite foods.



### Your food dollar stretches with brown rice!

At just 10 cents and 100 calories per serving, brown rice is a great choice for your wallet and health! Try these brown rice bowls that incorporate a “cook once eat all week” strategy. Cooked brown rice can be stored in the refrigerator for 3-4 days and frozen for up to 6 months. Cook a big batch of brown rice on the weekend and incorporate in a meal in a bowl:

1. Start with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cooked brown rice in a bowl.
  2. Layer your veggie in a variety of colors.
  3. Top with healthy proteins (at least  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ounce), like grilled chicken, cooked pinto beans, or hard boiled eggs. Then season or garnish:
- 😊 A southwest or Mexican style bowl: garnish with shredded low-fat cheese, salsa, cilantro, lime.
  - 😊 Asian style bowl: Garnish with Thai sauce or a curry sauce.
  - 😊 Breakfast bowl: Layer with fruits instead of veggies. Top with nuts, if children over 3 years old. Garnish with cinnamon, sprinkle with brown sugar, and add milk.

*Each bowl makes up to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ounce meat/meat alternate and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup bread/grain serving for a 3-5 year old at lunch. If using without meat for breakfast, layer at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup fruit to credit a serving of fruit with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup rice for grain/bread for a 3-5 year old.*

## Build a Healthy Plate with Protein

Everyone needs a variety of meat/meat alternate food each week. These protein-rich foods include lean meats, poultry, eggs, dry beans. Most children, 2 years and older, do not get enough variety of protein foods, so think about including some fish and dry peas, such as lentils.

⇒ Try fish and seafood fresh, frozen, or canned. Canned tuna can be rinsed to remove added sodium.

⇒ Protein foods are likely to be the most expensive foods in your budget. Pay extra attention to sales and opportunities to buy in quantity for lean meats and poultry.



### How can I encourage children to eat meat and meat alternates?

👍 Make foods fun by using creative names, such as Mighty Monster Meatloaf or Shark Pockets (tuna in pocket bread).

👍 Have children participate more in menu planning and preparation. Let them build a meal out of the baked potatoes by adding black beans and cheese or putting together the rice bowls on the previous pages.

👍 Have children help mash or mix dishes that you are making, like mashing kidney beans, blending chick peas for homemade hummus, or mixing the ingredients in chicken or egg salad.

### Budget friendly protein foods are not meats!

Work in non-meat meals whenever you can. Dry beans come in many varieties and canned beans are a great time saver for weeknight meals. Drain and rinse before using to reduce sodium.

At just 15 cents per egg, eggs are one of the most affordable sources of high quality protein. One egg contains about 6 grams of protein, essential vitamins and minerals, and only about 70 calories.



☺ **Hard-boiled Egg Dippers:** Take each peeled hard-boiled egg and insert a thin pretzel or bread stick into the larger end, being careful not to split the egg. Serve with a yogurt dip and finely chopped veggies for toppings.

☺ **Baked Toad-in-a-Hole:** Preheat oven to 375° F. Spray a baking sheet with cooking oil. Butter 6 slices of bread on both sides. With a cookie cutter or drinking glass, cut a round from the center of the bread. Place slices and rounds on sheet and bake for 6 minutes. Remove from oven and flip bread. Then, carefully crack 1 egg in the center of each slice of bread. Bake until egg is set, about 8-9 minutes, rotating sheet halfway through baking. Sprinkle with some cheese during the last 30 seconds of baking, if desired.

*Egg Dippers—each egg can serve a 3-5 year old or a 6-12 year old as a meat/meat alternate at lunch/supper. Toad-in-a-hole yields 6 servings of meat/meat alternate and grains/bread for a 6-12 year old at lunch/supper.*

## Build a Healthy Plate with Dairy

According to the Guidelines for Healthy Americans, all people over the age of 2 should be consuming low-fat dairy products. In the CACFP, children age 2 and older are to be served 1% or fat-free milk at breakfast, lunch/supper.

Children who consume milk and dairy products such as yogurt and cheese, get many important nutrients and have healthier diets than those who don't. Many children age 2-3 years, and most children age 4 years and older do not consume enough milk and dairy. As part of the CACFP, you do your part in making sure children get the dairy habit. For budget shopping for dairy, learn to compare unit prices.

- ⇒ Larger packages of food often have a lower unit price, which allows you to compare cost in different size containers. Compare cost for a gallon versus a half gallon of milk, a tub of yogurt versus individual-size packages.
- ⇒ Compare unit prices for block cheese and pre-shredded cheese. Sometimes pre-shredded cheese can have a lower unit price, particularly if it's on sale. You won't know until you check.

### How can I encourage children to drink milk?

We know that some children love drinking milk and some children not so much.

- 👍 Do a milk taste-test. Let children sample low-fat 1% milk and fat-free skim milk, and pick the favorite. Low fat milks have less calories and saturated fats, but do not reduce calcium or other important nutrients.
- 👍 Create your own Milk Mustache Event! Take pictures of children drinking low-fat milk and post them on your bulletin board. Blend low-fat milk and low-fat yogurt for a "milk mustache" activity. Include parents for more fun.



### Serve milk in fun ways

While milk is a required component at breakfast, lunch and supper for CACFP participation, you can have fun with how you serve and still have a creditable milk component. You can always mix your fruit/veggies and milk together.

- 😊 Blend milk servings with a serving of frozen fruit, such as strawberries, blueberries, and bananas.
- 😊 Blend milk servings with a mixed serving of greens, such as spinach or kale, and a sweet fruit, such as frozen green grapes.
- 😊 Serve milk in fun glasses or cups. Use colored straws.
- 😊 Keep milk cold! It tastes better and is safer to drink.

*To credit blended milk and vegetable/fruit start with 3/4 cup milk and 1/2 cup vegetable/fruit for each 3-5 year old at breakfast. For snack, start with 1/2 cup milk and 1/2 cup vegetable/fruit for each 3-5 year old.*

## Portion Sizes and Budget

Serve sensible portions to help make sure you don't throw away your food dollars. Are you filling up everyone's plate and then tossing half? Maybe your portion sizes need checking by reviewing the CACFP Meal Patterns for Infants and Children. We recommend that you measure a breakfast, lunch, and snack by the amounts required so you can see what are reasonable serving sizes.

How much do children need to eat? It would be great if there was an exact formula, but each child grows at a different rate and it's not straight up like the doctors' growth charts show! The best plan is to start with the amounts listed in the Meal Patterns for Children. Children will let you know when they are hungry...and when they are not. It is the job of adults to serve nutritious foods to children in portions that are sensible for their age.

The following is a general recommendation for the amount of food **for a day** for children age 3 to 5 years. This may help you communicate with parents on reasonable daily food amounts.

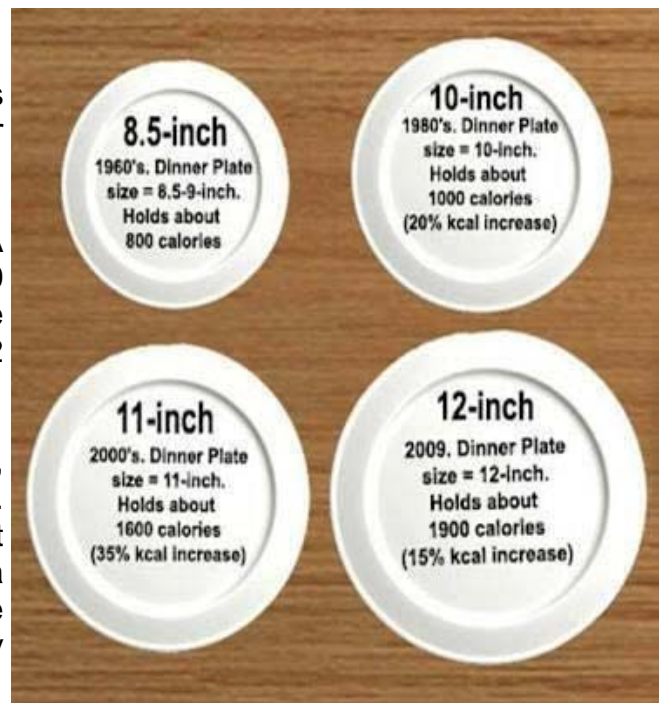
- ✓ 1 to 1½ cups of vegetables
- ✓ 1 cup of fruits
- ✓ 3 to 5 ounces of grains/breads
- ✓ 2 to 4 ounces of meat/meat alternates
- ✓ 2 to 3 cups of milk

### Plate size over time!

One of the best portion control strategies is to use smaller plates and bowls for everyone.

Plate sizes have dramatically increased. A standard dinner plate size in 1980 was 10 inches in diameter. By the early 2000s, the dinner plate had increased in size to 12 inches in diameter.

When it comes to beverages, use a taller, thinner size versus a shorter, wider size. Research has shown that we perceive that we have more in a glass when served in a taller, thinner glass, than when the same amount is served in a short, wide glass. Try as an experiment with your child care!





## Menu Planning = Saving Money

The time you spend pre-planning your menus will save you money. The CACFP expects you to post your menus for the day. Take it a step further, plan and post menus for the week. Go even further, and make menu planning part of your child care curriculum! Even young children can help by making charts of vegetables and fruits by color and help you plan those tasting parties.

Plan your meals before you shop! Whether you plan for the week ahead, or create a 3-4 week cycle menu, you will reap the rewards in your pocket! Planning menus using the MyPlate model allows you to focus on the components of a healthy meal without making life too complicated. Research shows that foods closer to their natural state, not overly processed, are the healthiest choices.

### Plan Meals That Look and Taste Good

- ☺ Include foods that are different shapes—round, square, rectangle, wedge or triangle shaped.
- ☺ Include foods that are different colors! Easy using MyPlate as vegetables and fruits are always included.
- ☺ Include foods that are different textures—soft, fluffy, crunchy, crispy, creamy, smooth.
- ☺ Include foods that have different tastes—sweet, sour, tart...not all together, but throughout your week. You can challenge everyone's taste buds a bit.
- ☺ Include some foods in each meal that are easy to like.
- ☺ Introduce new foods with familiar foods at meals when the children are not too tired.

### Have a Food Shopping Game Plan

- ⇒ Eat before you shop. Grocery shopping hungry can lead to impulse buying and unhealthy food choices.
- ⇒ Read the sales flyer. Sales flyers are usually released mid-week, and are now always online at the store website.
- ⇒ Use the store flyers with your child care when planning menus with the children.
- ⇒ Look up and down for savings. *Stores often stock the priciest items at eye level.* You can save big by looking at the upper and lower shelves too.
- ⇒ Grab from the back. Stores typically stock shelves from back to front, placing the newest items behind the older ones. Reach in the back for the freshest items especially in the produce, dairy, and meat aisles.
- ⇒ Ask for a rain check. If a sale item has run out, ask the store for a rain check. This allows you to pay the sale price after the item is restocked.
- ⇒ **Always shop with a list.** We created a sample on the following page that has space for 2 different stores, and a place to jot down the meals you are planning.

# Meal Planning Worksheet

## Grocery List

STORE \_\_\_\_\_

Vegetables/fruits

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Meat/meat alternates/Dairy

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Grains/Breads

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

STORE \_\_\_\_\_

Vegetables/fruits

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Meat/meat alternates/ Dairy

_____	_____
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Grains/Breads

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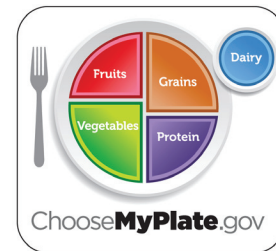
## Weekly Meals

	Breakfast	Lunch	Snack(s)	Dinner
Monday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tuesday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wednesday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Thursday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Friday	_____	_____	_____	_____

# 10 tips

Nutrition  
Education Series

# eating better on a budget



## 10 tips to help you stretch your food dollars

**Get the most for your food budget!** There are many ways to save money on the foods that you eat. The three main steps are planning before you shop, purchasing the items at the best price, and preparing meals that stretch your food dollars.

### 1 plan, plan, plan!

Before you head to the grocery store, plan your meals for the week. Include meals like stews, casseroles, or stir-fries, which “stretch” expensive items into more portions. Check to see what foods you already have and make a list for what you need to buy.



### 2 get the best price

Check the local newspaper, online, and at the store for sales and coupons. Ask about a loyalty card for extra savings at stores where you shop. Look for specials or sales on meat and seafood—often the most expensive items on your list.

### 3 compare and contrast

Locate the “Unit Price” on the shelf directly below the product. Use it to compare different brands and different sizes of the same brand to determine which is more economical.

### 4 buy in bulk

It is almost always cheaper to buy foods in bulk. Smart choices are family packs of chicken, steak, or fish and larger bags of potatoes and frozen vegetables. Before you shop, remember to check if you have enough freezer space.

### 5 buy in season

Buying fruits and vegetables in season can lower the cost and add to the freshness! If you are not going to use them all right away, buy some that still need time to ripen.

### 6 convenience costs... go back to the basics

Convenience foods like frozen dinners, pre-cut vegetables, and instant rice, oatmeal, or grits will cost you more than if you were to make them from scratch. Take the time to prepare your own—and save!

### 7 easy on your wallet

Certain foods are typically low-cost options all year round. Try beans for a less expensive protein food. For vegetables, buy carrots, greens, or potatoes. As for fruits, apples and bananas are good choices.



### 8 cook once...eat all week!

Prepare a large batch of favorite recipes on your day off (double or triple the recipe). Freeze in individual containers. Use them throughout the week and you won't have to spend money on take-out meals.

### 9 get your creative juices flowing

Spice up your leftovers—use them in new ways. For example, try leftover chicken in a stir-fry or over a garden salad, or to make chicken chili. Remember, throwing away food is throwing away your money!

### 10 eating out

Restaurants can be expensive. Save money by getting the early bird special, going out for lunch instead of dinner, or looking for “2 for 1” deals. Stick to water instead of ordering other beverages, which add to the bill.



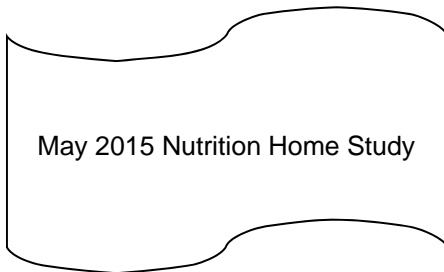
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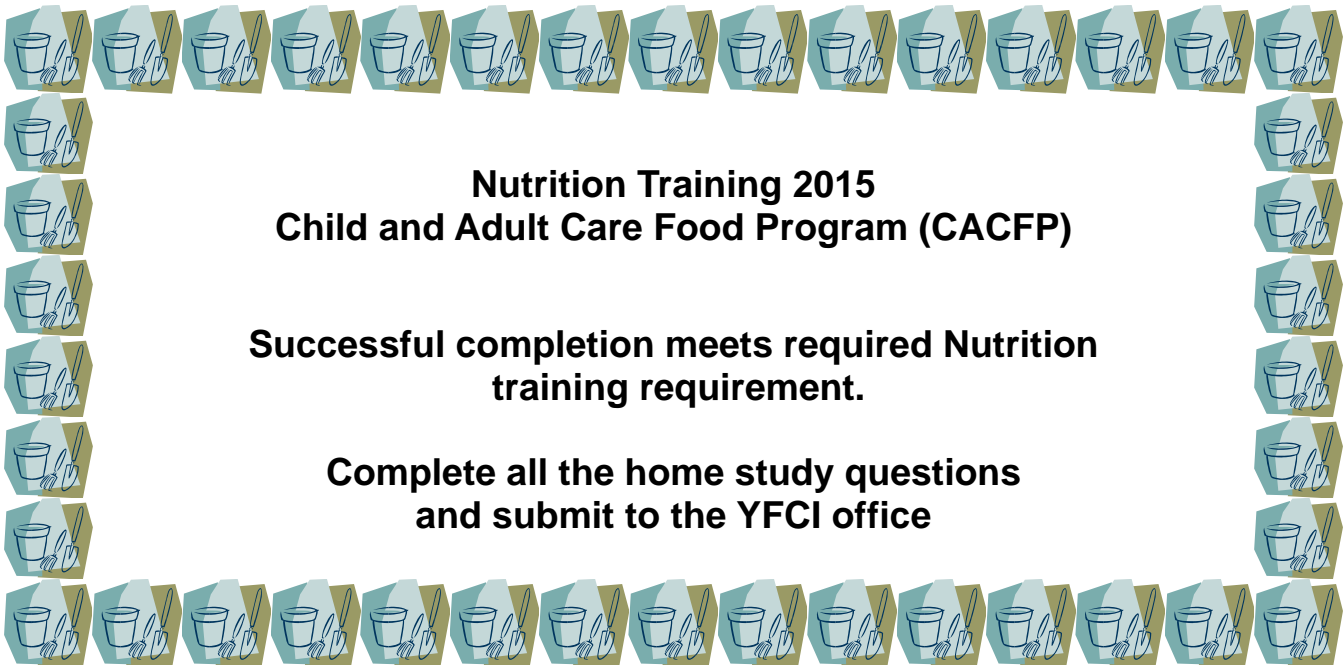
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TO:

May 2015 Nutrition Home Study



## Nutrition Training 2015 Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

**Successful completion meets required Nutrition training requirement.**

**Complete all the home study questions and submit to the YFCI office**

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