



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS
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Leader Training Guide

Making a Nutritious Sandwich

Objectives:

The participants will be able to:

1. Understand the benefits of a healthy sandwich
2. Build a balanced sandwich using nutritious ingredients
3. Read nutrition fact labels and compare options
4. Make lower-sodium, lower-sugar, and higher-fiber choices

Lesson Overview/Introduction:

Eating nutritious foods helps our bodies grow, stay energized, and maintain overall health. One easy way to make a quick, healthy meal is to make a nutritious sandwich. In this lesson, participants will learn how to choose healthy ingredients from different food groups to build a balanced sandwich. Participants will explore the importance of proteins, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy spreads while practicing food decision-making skills.

Lesson:

Benefits of Building a Healthy Sandwich (5minutes)

- Balanced Blood Sugar
 - Pairing carbohydrates with protein, healthy fats, and fiber can help support more stable blood sugar levels and sustained energy.
- Prevents Cravings
 - When our blood sugar drops too low, our bodies crave sugar to bring it back up. Balanced meals may help reduce hunger and cravings later in the day.
- Better Sleep
 - Eating balanced meals throughout the day may support overall health and healthy sleep patterns.
- Balanced energy

- When pairing the 3 points above, we will achieve long-lasting, balanced energy.
- Help keep you full
 - Protein, fat, and fiber all help slow digestion. This is going to help fill us up and stay full for longer.
- Balanced Hormones
 - Eating a balanced diet provides nutrients that help support many normal body functions, including hormone production and regulation.

The Basics of a Balanced Sandwich (10-15 minutes)

Making a nutritious sandwich involves building a balanced meal by choosing whole grains for sustained energy, lean protein for muscle growth, and fresh produce for essential vitamins. We cannot forget about the spread. Using a low-fat, reduced-salt spread on sandwiches can be both nutritious and appealing.

1. The Foundation: Choose a Healthy Base

The bread sets the nutritional tone of your sandwich.

- Best Choices: 100% whole-wheat, rye, sourdough, or multigrain bread.
- Why it matters: Whole grains provide complex carbohydrates, dietary fiber for digestion, B Vitamins, help keep you full longer, and support blood sugar.
- Alternatives: Whole-wheat pita pockets, flatbreads, high-fiber wraps, or lettuce wraps if you want to skip bread or are gluten-free.

2. The Spread: Flavorful and Functional

- Skip the heavy mayonnaise or sugary condiments, which often add empty calories and excess sodium. (Note: “Empty Calories” are foods or beverages that are high in calories but lack essential nutrients like fiber, vitamins, minerals, and protein)
- Healthy options: Mashed avocado, hummus, nut butters, pesto, olive oil-based spreads, or a light smear of mustard
- Why it matters: Spreads add essential moisture and flavor, while healthy fats (like avocado) promote heart health.

3. The Protein: The Muscle Builder

Lean proteins help maintain energy, support growth, and keep you satisfied.

- Animal-based: Shredded rotisserie chicken, turkey, canned tuna (packed in water), or sliced hard-boiled eggs
- Plant-based: Hummus, smashed chickpeas, beans or mashed tofu
- Avoid: Processed deli meats, which are often packed with sodium, nitrates, and preservatives.

4. The Produce: Crunch and Color

Vegetables turn a basic sandwich into a nutritional powerhouse, providing antioxidants, fiber, and important micronutrients.

- Options: Baby spinach, crisp romaine lettuce, thinly sliced cucumbers, tomatoes, shredded carrots, or roasted red peppers
- Pro-tip: Pack your vegetables in the middle and proteins on the bottom to keep the bread from getting soggy

5. Optional Extras: Boost the Nutrients

Add a final layer of texture or a flavor pop.

- Low-fat cheeses like Swiss, mozzarella, or a sprinkle of feta
- Fermented foods like sauerkraut or microgreens to support gut health.

Understanding Nutrition Fact Labels (10-15 minutes)

Nutrition fact labels provide important information about the nutrients found in packaged foods and can help us make healthier choices. By learning how to read these labels, we can compare products, understand serving sizes, and identify foods that are higher or lower in nutrients such as sugar, sodium, fiber, and protein.

1. Understand Nutrition Facts Labels

Review the following parts of a Nutrition Facts Label with participants:

- Serving Size
- Calories
- Proteins
- Sugar
- Sodium
- Fiber
- Fat
- Ingredients list

Discuss:

- Why is protein important?
- Why should we watch our sugar and sodium intake?
- Why are whole grains and fiber healthy choices?

2. Compare the Labels

Participants will compare two similar sandwich items and decide which is the healthier option.

- White Bread vs Whole Wheat Bread
- Regular Chips vs Baked Chips
- Regular Mayo vs Light Mayo
- Ham vs Turkey
- Sugary Drink vs Water

Discuss:

- Which item has less sugar?
- Which item has less sodium?
- Which item has more protein or fiber?
- Which option would you choose for a healthier sandwich meal?

Suggested Materials:

- Pencil
- Sample Nutrition Facts labels (printed or real) (optional)
- A “Healthy Choice Comparison” worksheet (optional)
- Sandwich ingredients or pictures of ingredients (optional)

Suggested Activities:

Nutrition Facts Labels

- Collect Nutrition Facts Labels from various breads, proteins, or condiments used by the group.
- Give participants labels from bread, deli meats (or other proteins), or condiments.
- Teach them to compare
 - Fiber, protein, sodium, added sugars, fat
 - Optional: Serving size, calories, and ingredients

- Simple Rule:
 - More fiber, less sodium/added sugars, shorter ingredient lists
 - Optional PowerPoint <https://docs.google.com/presentation>

Group Discussion & Reflection

- What ingredient swap surprised you?
- What healthy change could you make this week?
- What barriers make healthy eating difficult?

Lesson Summary:

In this lesson, participants learned how to make a nutritious sandwich by selecting healthy ingredients from different food groups. They explored the importance of balanced meals and discussed how proteins, whole grains, vegetables, and healthy spreads help support growth, energy, and overall health. Participants also learned how to read and use Nutrition Facts Labels to understand better what is in their foods, including calories, sugar, sodium, protein, fat, and fiber. They practiced comparing food labels to identify healthier options and make informed food choices. By the end of the lesson, participants gained a better understanding of healthy eating habits and how to apply them when preparing everyday meals.

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Sources/References:

- <https://eatthegains.com/how-to-make-a-healthy-sandwich/>
- <https://hhcseniorservices.org/health-wellness/news/newsroom-detail?articleId=68177&publicid=395>
- <https://www.everydayhealth.com/healthy-recipes/healthy-sandwich-and-wrap-recipes-that-take-minutes-to-make/>

Additional Resources:

- Interactive Nutrition Facts Label Identifier:
<https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/interactivenutritionfactslabel/>