

THE POWER OF CHOICE

Helping Youth Make Healthy Eating and Fitness Decisions

Everybody's got a different groove,

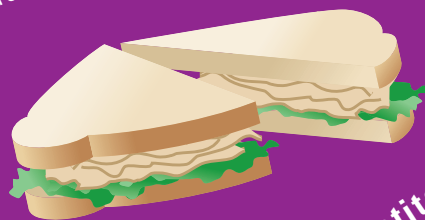


Different way to eat, Different way to move, And what we do makes us who we are,



So get out there and move your feet, When you work up an appetite,

Choose it and choose it right.



United States Department of Agriculture
Food & Nutrition Service

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Who Developed The Power of Choice?

The *Power of Choice* is a guide created for leaders of afterschool programs to help young adolescents understand how their decisions about eating and physical activity can affect their health now and for years to come. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) jointly developed *The Power of Choice*, a healthy lifestyle initiative.

The Power of Choice is one of the many communication vehicles that FNS' Team Nutrition has produced to support the *School Meals Initiative*. This project was also supported by other DHHS agencies and an informal coalition (Federal agencies and other public/private sector organizations) called *Girl Power and You*, which provided technical expertise, resources, and financial support for this national initiative. As the project broadened, its target expanded to include both girls and boys, resulting in a new title *The Power of Choice*.

Team Nutrition: Brief Background

USDA's Team Nutrition is committed to enhancing the health of children by continuously improving their lifelong eating and physical activity habits based on the principles of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid. Public-private partnerships and supporters form the "team" that reaches out to our Nation's children, involving schools, families, communities, and the media in innovative and exciting ways to improve the health of our children where they live, learn, and play. This is a comprehensive effort to ensure that school meals, including after school snacks, meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Team Nutrition also seeks to motivate children to make food choices for a healthful diet. These efforts are supported through training and technical assistance to school foodservice professionals, teachers, and other adults working with children, and their families.

Acknowledgments

The Food and Nutrition Service and the Food and Drug Administration wish to extend a sincere thank you to all who “powered” this important document from start to finish. We appreciate the DHHS Bureau of Maternal Child Health, Bureau of Primary Healthcare, and the Office of Women’s Health contributions to the funding of the initial project. Special thanks also go to our reviewers who provided their technical expertise, insights, and advice in creating this document.

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See also the Team Nutrition website for a fully downloadable version of this Leader’s Guide at: teamnnutrition.usda.gov under the Educators icon.

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See also the Team Nutrition Web site for a fully downloadable version of this Leader’s Guide at: teamnnutrition.usda.gov under the Resource Library.

Tips for Leaders:

To see if your afterschool care program qualifies for reimbursement for USDA’s Afterschool Snacks, check this website: www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/afterschool/default.htm

A Look At The Power of Choice A Leader's Guide

Helping Youth Make Healthy Eating and Fitness Decisions

Welcome to *The Power of Choice*. This is your guide for an after school, interactive learning program for young adolescents (ages 11 to 13). The messages and activities found in *The Power of Choice* can help guide preteens toward healthier lifestyles. This Leader's Guide is designed to build skills, motivate, and empower them to make smarter food and activity choices for a healthier future.

Although most adolescents are introduced to some health concepts at school, class time for teaching and practicing healthful eating and active living may be limited. Today's youth are bombarded by an overwhelming number of choices that challenge their ability to make wise decisions in choosing food or in being active. Parents, schools, and health authorities are increasingly concerned about the growing number of children, especially preteens and teens, who are overweight, obese, or at risk of becoming obese adults. What difference can *The Power of Choice* make on the choices confronting kids today? It can give adolescents the skills and relevant experiences to make better, more informed choices for their health, including maintaining or growing into a healthy weight.

This Leader's Guide presents an approach that involves young adolescents in interactive activities that helps them to explore the common link among health choices, food safety, and fitness. Preteens need to have the option to develop life skills that build confidence through positive interactions with peers, caring adults, and their families. They need to practice thinking skills, goal setting, sound decision-making and being involved in their communities.

Your efforts make a difference in the quality of preteens' lives by helping them choose to become the best they can be. Enthusiasm is contagious and engages everyone. No previous training is needed to put this user-friendly material into practice. Just "power up," have fun, and learn as you go along!

How It Works

This Leader's Guide contains a set of tools designed to empower adolescents through specific skill building activities and motivational messages. The content in this Leader's Guide is based on the principles of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, MyPyramid, and the Nutrition Facts label.

The goal of the Leader's Guide is to empower young adolescents to feel and look their best, now and for the years to come. *The Power of Choice* is designed to help you show preteens the importance of taking care of their health. It offers them the power to choose what's right for their individual healthy eating and active living goals.

Skill-Based Outcomes: *The Power of Choice* after school activities help young adolescents:

- ❖ Identify their personal values.
- ❖ Make healthful food choices in real-life settings:
 - Use the MyPyramid and Nutrition Facts and Ingredients List on food labels as tools for making healthful food choices.
 - Get enough fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and calcium-rich products.
 - Choose lower fat foods more often, especially foods low in saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol.
- ❖ Move more and sit less as a daily routine.
- ❖ Prepare food in safe, nutritious ways.
- ❖ Set goals and make smart food and physical activity choices that reflect their personal values.
- ❖ Get support from family and friends for their sound food and fitness efforts.

Empowerment Messages: *The Power of Choice* motivates and empowers youth by reinforcing these messages:

- ❖ Smart food and physical activity choices help preteens achieve what's important to them.
- ❖ Preteens are responsible for what they eat.
- ❖ They are responsible for their level of physical activity.
- ❖ They can make choices to maintain or improve their health.

Family support helps preteens make healthful eating and active living an everyday habit.

Leader's Guide Components

You'll find this guide to be a self-contained teaching tool with three main components.

- (1) The 10 topics and related activities
- (2) The companion posters and reproducibles
- (3) Additional Information, including additional content and activities.
An Overview of the Educational Content is provided in chart format.
For More Information provides other key public and private sources.

1. Topics and Activities

The Power of Choice engages preteens in 10 topic-related sessions about healthful eating and being active. Flexibility in activity programming is suggested and encouraged. Each topic follows this format:

Topic Introduction

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <i>Skill-Based Outcomes</i> | • What preteens will be able to do after completing the activities |
| <i>Empowerment Messages</i> | • Key points to convey |
| <i>Activity Summary</i> | • Description of the activities |

Preparation and Background Guidance

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| <i>Getting Ready</i> | • List of specified items for each activity and tasks to do beforehand |
| <i>Do You Know?</i> | • Background about each topic |

Topic Activities

Series of topic-related, hands-on activities:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| <i>Icebreaker</i> | • Introduces and leads into the topic themes |
| <i>Several activities</i> | • Teach the skills and convey the messages |
| <i>A snack</i> | • Teaches how to prepare easy, healthful snacks |
| <i>Wrap up</i> | • Reviews messages; the optional handout chart is for preteens to check and share weekly progress; an acknowledgment certificate (also optional) can be used for recognition of accomplishments |

2. "Power" Tools for You

Reproducible Materials and Posters

"Dear Family" Letter - Personalize and send this letter to involve the families of your preteens. Also use it to inform families about *The Power of Choice* and the fun activities that will be taking place at your site.

"yourCHOICE" Handout - Duplicate and use at each session to help preteens set personal goals and take action steps for healthful eating and active living.

Recipe Booklet: *yourCHOICE...Great Tastes! Cool Moves!*

Duplicate and share the recipe booklet with preteens to reinforce the key message for each topic. The booklet describes easy snacks that preteens can prepare. It is also useful as a promotional tool to recruit preteens for future sessions, or as an opportunity to let preteens be creative.

Recognition Certificate - Duplicate this certificate and present to preteens to acknowledge accomplishments and progress.

Mini-Posters: *It's Up to You, How Much Do YOU Eat?, Move It!, READ IT before you EAT IT!, FIGHT BAC!* - The activities are based upon the messages of these posters, along with the other materials. Display selected posters for each activity. (Posters are included as part of this guide.) Small black and white poster images are also included for duplication.

Information on how to print out your own posters is provided in the Reproducibles Section. Organizations participating in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs may request posters to supplement the resources provided in this publication.

Nutrition Facts Cards - Duplicate several sets of the *Nutrition Facts Cards*, cut them apart, and use them throughout the activities to help make food decisions.

Ingredient Lists – Duplicate and cut apart the Ingredient Lists. Use them for Topic 4.

3. Additional Information

Quick View of the Additional Information Contents

1. Overview of the Educational Content
2. Personal Power Tips for Adults! Putting Power in Your Food and Physical Activity Choices
3. Young Adolescents: Healthier Lifestyles
4. Spotlight on What Preteens Eat, What They Need
5. Let Them Talk! Tips for Active Learning and Meaningful Communication
6. How to Get Family and Community Support
7. Additional “Quick” Activities for Each of the 10 Topics
8. For More Information

1. Overview of the Educational Content

Three charts show the scope of the content for all the activities provided in this publication.

- ❖ **Skill-Based Outcomes:** Preteens who participate in the various activities will be able to build skills for a healthy lifestyle, and be able to prepare healthful snacks. As a staff leader, help adolescents learn and practice the skills cited in this chart.
- ❖ **Empowerment Messages:** Each topic contains positive health messages that reflect the main ideas shared in the session. When working with both adolescents and adults, repeat and share the messages found in this chart.
- ❖ **Matrix of Activities:** The Matrix of Activities chart serves both as an index to activities and a summary overview of all the activities described in this publication. Using different subject codes will help you locate activities that address specific subjects, such as goal-setting or food safety.

For More Information

More than a dozen organizations and websites are listed that provide helpful information on food, nutrition, physical activity, or working with adolescents.

See also the Team Nutrition Web site for a fully downloadable version of this Leader’s Guide at teamnutrition.usda.gov under the Resource Library.

Making This Guide Work for You

How to Use It

The Power of Choice is a flexible guide for your afterschool care program.

You have the “power to choose” how you wish to use this guide. You can:

1) Follow the Leader’s Guide plan of activities for 10 sessions (of about 1 hour each).

- ❖ Present at least the first four topics sequentially to help preteens learn the most.
- ❖ Spread topic activities over 2 or more days, when possible.
- ❖ Use the Leader’s Guide in selecting activities that suit your needs for the moment.

Tips for Leaders:

Invite preteens to select the activities, and then involve them in preparing the food and presenting the activities they selected. This is an age when preteens want to be involved in making decisions and doing, as well as learning. Making choices and being involved teach personal responsibility and help develop self-esteem.

2) Serve easy-to-make snacks, and do active things when you meet.

Food attracts preteens to afterschool care programs, and USDA may reimburse some of the costs of the foods. To get more information on the reimbursement guidelines, be sure to check the section on page viii. Involve preteens in preparing afterschool snacks. Once they learn how, they can make these healthful snacks at home. Besides being fun, preparing snacks also gives practice in making smart food choices and in following the basics of food safety. While some preteens prepare the snack, involve others in a physical activity. Let kids decide what’s fun to do while being physically active in every session.

3) Let families and your community know about *The Power of Choice*.

- ❖ Personalize and send home the family letter.
- ❖ Plan an event for families in the first few weeks and again at the final session.
- ❖ Additional activities, lasting about 20 minutes each, are included that complement each topic. Do them in any order to create awareness, practice a skill in an informal setting, or extend one of the sessions.

- ❖ Additional “around your community” activities that complement each topic are also included. These activities support preteens through community and family involvement. Do them as a group, or encourage preteens to do them on their own.

4) Take the time to check out additional information on this CD before starting the activities.

- ❖ Scan the summary of skill-based outcomes and empowerment messages specific to each topic.
- ❖ Look at the matrix depicting an overview of the 10 topics and related activities beginning on page A-8.
- ❖ *Personal Power Tips for Adults!* helps you to be a positive role model while working with preteens.
- ❖ Read the *Spotlight on What Preteens Eat and What They Need* section to learn more about preteens and their nutrition and physical activity needs.
- ❖ The “Let Them Talk!” section offers more active learning and helpful communication tips.

Reimbursement for Snacks

Many afterschool programs qualify for Federal reimbursement for snacks through USDA's National School Lunch Program or Child and Adult Care Food Program. This can help reduce your food costs. To qualify, your program must include regularly scheduled educational or enrichment activities in an organized, structured, and adult-supervised environment, as well as meet other requirements. For each snack activity, *The Power of Choice* shows an example of the kinds and amounts of foods that are needed to meet the meal pattern of USDA's Afterschool Snacks. Not all food costs associated with the program are reimbursable.

Tips for Leaders:

To see the eligibility criteria and to determine if your program qualifies, check this website: www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/afterschool/default.htm.

USDA's Afterschool Snacks meal pattern is based on the nutritional needs of children ages 6 to 12 and is as follows:

Two different components from the four listed must be served:

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| • Milk, fluid | 1 cup (8 ounces) |
| • Meat or meat alternates | 1 ounce |
| • Fruits or vegetables or full-strength juice | 3/4 cup (6 ounces) |
| • Grains or breads | 1 serving |

Because USDA's Afterschool Snacks are available for children through the age of 18, additional foods may be needed to meet the calorie and nutrient needs of children ages 13 to 18. To assist providers, cycle menus have been developed that are divided into two age categories: ages 6 to 12 and ages 13 to 18. For more information, visit: www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Care/Regs-Policy/Snacks/Cycle_Menu.htm.

How to Reach Young Adolescents

Listen to them, learn about their needs, laugh with them, and lead them to choose what's right for their health. This kind of atmosphere offers a sense of security and respect for their needs. Here's how *The Power of Choice* speaks to preteens—at a time when their lives and bodies are changing so much.

Uniquely Speaking **Adolescents are individuals.**

Each preteen is an individual, developing at a different rate, liking different foods, doing different things, having different interests, and growing up in a different family. Their bodies, interests, and daily routines are likely to be different from the way they were a year or even a few months ago. They're beginning their adolescent growth spurt. Being different from one another and from the way they were as children is perfectly normal.

The Power of Choice recognizes that each person brings a unique set of family and personal experiences, needs, and skills to your afterschool program. This guide:

- ❖ Uses a variety of learning activities. Preteens learn in different ways.
- ❖ Gives preteens a chance to talk, discover, and direct activities, making learning experiences relevant and more fun.
- ❖ Offers flexible programming, including both long and short activities. You choose the ones that match their level of interest.
- ❖ Helps preteens make individual food and lifestyle choices. They'll learn how to make choices that are right for them, now and in years to come.

Their Values Are Showing **Adolescents need to explore what's important.**

Adolescence is a time when preteens explore and test their values. Values are what they consider to be important, for example: health, friendship, family, truth, self-expression, justice, freedom, caring, respect, acceptance of differences, and responsibility. Their values show in what they do, say, and think. Their goals for health and their food and lifestyle choices also reflect their values. Being aware of personal values also helps them make smart food and lifestyle decisions. The best choices are based on consideration of their own values, not peer pressure. *The Power of Choice* has several activities per topic to help preteens decide what is important to them.

Are They Ready?

Change happens in stages.

A few small changes can make a difference in a preteen's health, now and in the future. Some preteens are ready to take steps to eat healthier foods and move more. They may not know why or how. For others, a reason to make changes for their health hasn't even crossed their minds.

The Power of Choice suggests ways you can help preteens move through the early stages of change, beginning with the simple awareness that healthful food choices and active living make a difference. Here's how you can offer support:

For preteens who say...	You can...
Stage 1 ... <i>"I don't intend to make any immediate changes in my food choices or lifestyle."</i>	Explore reasons for healthier choices and for changing food and lifestyle choices.
Stage 2 ... <i>"I'll change sometime but not right away."</i>	Discuss why they don't want to change now, and then help them feel confident about learning how to make healthier choices. Talk about who can help them.
Stage 3 ... <i>"I plan to change my food choices or lifestyle soon."</i>	Help them set small, achievable goals for healthier eating and more physical activity. Reinforce small steps they've taken already.
Stage 4 ... <i>"I've changed my food choices or lifestyle."</i>	Give positive reinforcement and more chances to practice healthful choices.
Stage 5 ... <i>"I made a change – and I'm still doing it."</i>	Continue positive reinforcement. Help them apply what they're doing to new situations.

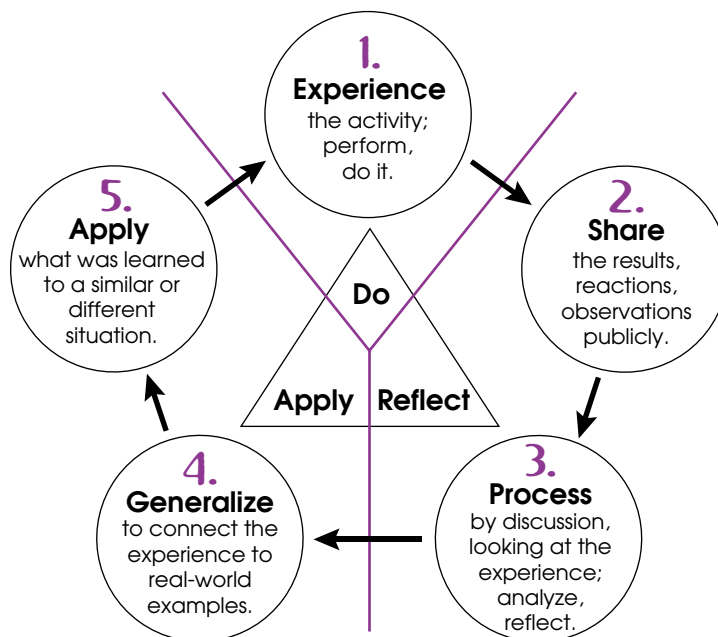
“Hands On” Learning
Adolescents learn by doing.

Hands-on, or experiential, learning is effective. “Doing” is more meaningful and memorable than just “seeing” or “hearing” information. Learning by doing offers many benefits. It develops competence and self-confidence, encourages personal initiative, teaches patience and hard work, and helps preteens apply what they learn to the real world. Besides, hands-on learning involves preteens, and it’s often more fun!

Follow these steps to make active, hands-on learning more effective:

- ❖ **First...do it.** Start with a common experience that preteens can explore or discover without telling or showing them exactly how.
- ❖ **Second...reflect on it.** Encourage preteens to talk about their experiences and share what they see or think about them. For example, “How does the experience apply to what you eat or how you spend your time? What else do you need to know to use the skills and information you just learned?” Remember, talking takes time. There are no right or wrong answers.
- ❖ **Third...apply it.** To learn life skills, help preteens connect their experiences to events, tasks, and situations—including health-related decisions—in their lives. Encourage them to take action.

Experiential Learning Process



Tips for Leaders:

Here's how to guide active learning:

- ❖ *Be personally enthusiastic—it's a fun way to learn!*
- ❖ *Stay flexible. Let the activity continue as long as your participants are learning.*
- ❖ *Be a timekeeper. Adjust the activity to match their pace.*
- ❖ *Guide the activities so preteens stay on track.*
- ❖ *Watch their interactions. Your observations will help guide discussion later.*

Let's Talk

Adolescents need talking time.

Adolescents love to talk and share their experiences. They also need to feel that it's safe to say what they think without fear of sharing unacceptable or wrong ideas. Open communication helps them confront the endless variety of issues they face every day growing up. Discussion is also key to the process of hands-on learning.

The Power of Choice encourages plenty of time for preteens to talk. For many adults, talking with preteens may seem challenging, especially when the issues get tough. Food and physical activity are often safe topics to start with and to practice your listening skills.

Refer to "Let Them Talk!" on the computer disk for more active learning and meaningful communication tips.

Empowering Preteens

Adolescents need goal-setting and decision-making skills.

With their growing independence, preteens make many health-related choices every day. However, their emotions, preoccupation with looks, and peers may influence their decisions more than doing what's best for their health. Even if health is a priority, most preteens need skills and motivation to make smart eating and active living choices a daily habit. *The Power of Choice* helps preteens learn how to set goals and make decisions. As they learn to make healthful choices, these skills help them take responsibility for their lives.

Refer to "Young Adolescents: Healthier Lifestyles" on the computer disk for more about preteens and their nutrition and physical activity needs.

For more information about nutrition education resources and information, go to www.fns.usda.gov/fns/nutrition.htm.