This activity is adapted by permission from *Nutrition Fun with Brocc and Roll* by Connie Liakos Evers, MS, RD.

**Description:** Students track their daily eating habits by writing down the things they eat or drink and categorizing each item into one of six different food groups.

**Learning Objectives:** Students will practice analyzing their eating habits.

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<th>SCIENCE TOPICS</th>
<th>GRADE LEVEL</th>
<th>PROCESS SKILLS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Human health</td>
<td>3–5</td>
<td>Choosing healthy foods</td>
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<td>Categories of food groups</td>
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<td>Data collection</td>
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<td>Importance of fruits and vegetables</td>
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<td>Analyzing information</td>
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**TIME REQUIRED**

- **Advance Preparation:** 20 minutes
- **Set Up:** None
- **Introduce Activity:** 20 minutes
- **Student Logs:** Ongoing
- **Discussion:** 15 minutes
- **Clean Up:** None
- Copies of *Sizing Up My Diet Pocket Tally* activity sheets (one per student)
- Additional copies of the *My Pocket Tally* sheet (optional and dependent on the number of days students will keep a tally)
- Pencils or pens (one per student)
- Markers
- Transparencies (optional)
- Overhead projector (optional)

**ADVANCE PREPARATION**

- After reviewing this write-up, determine how the activity will work best for your class. Factors to consider include whether students will be able to take their tally sheets home and bring them back to school the next day, whether and when they will remember to fill in their entries, and whether they may need guidance when they enter information.

One possible strategy for implementing the activity is to structure the activity primarily within the school day (for example, students fill in a given day’s breakfast and lunch and the previous night’s dinner during class time in the afternoon). Students may still be assigned to create a list of dinner items at home in order to ensure family involvement.

- Determine the number of days you would like for students to keep their tallies. This could range from two days for young students up to a week or more. Each *My Pocket Tally* sheet provides students with space to track the information for two days.

- Make enough copies of the *Sizing Up My Diet* instruction sheet and *My Pocket Tally* activity sheets for students. Students will only need one copy of the instruction/example sheet.

**Teacher Tip:** If students are keeping their tallies for a total of only two days, the instruction and tally sheets can be copied as one double-sided sheet.

- If desired, make a transparency out of a blank *My Pocket Tally* master sheet to fill out as a class. Alternatively, extra copies of this page can be made and handed out for students to practice filling in the sheets, or the example tally sheet on the instruction sheet may be discussed.
INTRODUCING THE ACTIVITY

Tailor your presentation to your individual style and to students’ ability levels. Sample scripts and example questions are provided in italics.

- Begin the class with a group discussion.
  *With this activity we are going to learn more about nutrition and why it is important to eat healthy foods. Has anyone heard the word nutrition before? Does anyone know what we mean when we talk about nutrition? Nutrition is the science of healthy eating.*

- *Why do you think it’s important to eat healthy foods?*

- Help students brainstorm as necessary. Record students’ answers on a large piece of paper or a white board. Make sure to keep the class focused on positive reasons to eat healthy foods. Possible answers include:
  - Keeping our bodies strong and healthy (muscles, teeth, bones, heart, etc.).
  - Helping us to feel good (happy, energetic, etc.).
  - Giving us the energy to do our favorite activities (sports, play, school, etc.).
  - Keeping our brains working and helping us do well in school (smarter, better grades, pay attention in class, etc.).

- Next, review the basic food groups with students and brainstorm examples of healthy foods.

- Record students’ answers. Possible answers include: whole grains, fruits and vegetables, lean meats (e.g., turkey, chicken, fish), low fat dairy (cheese, yogurt, milk), beans and nuts, foods low in added sugar, salt, saturated fat, and cholesterol, etc.

- *What is one healthy choice you’ve made?*
  Students may have a variety of personal experiences to share, including eating fruits and vegetables, drinking juice instead of soda, or eating healthy snacks instead of chips, cookies, etc.

- Once the class has finished this discussion, tell them they are going to record their daily food and drink choices. Looking at this information will help them think about their own choices and decide where they might want to make changes.

PROCEDURE

- Pass around the *Sizing Up My Diet* and *My Pocket Tally* activity sheets.
- Walk students through the instructions for filling out the sheet. If using a transparency made out of a blank *My Pocket Tally* master sheet or extra
copies of the sheet, fill these out as a class while inventing entries and
discussing which category they fall into as a group.

- Explain to students the structure you have chosen for the activity, including
  when they will make their entries and the total number of days they will be
  tracking their diets.
- Discuss student’s findings after they have completed some or all of their data
collection.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Remember, there are no incorrect answers. Let students present their ideas and
guide the conversation to the greatest extent possible.

- Ask students to share items from their tallies.
- *How many total fruits and vegetables did you eat?*
  Students’ answers will vary. Encourage all students to share at least one item.
- Students will have a variety of findings to share. After asking them to share
  some of their data, ask them to think about their tallies in the context of
  specific questions and recommendations.
- *How many people ate breakfast?* Research has demonstrated that eating
  breakfast directly benefits school achievement. Children who eat breakfast also
  take in more nutrients throughout the day than those who don’t, even when
  those who skip breakfast try to make up for it by eating more later in the day.
- *Nutrition scientists recommend we eat at least five different fruits and
  vegetables in a day. That might seem like a lot, but eating even more than
  that is better! Did anyone eat five different fruits and vegetables in one day?*
- The instructor may wish to use other recommendations from the MyPyramid
  chart (see the *Nutrition Background Information* section of this Teachers’
  Guide) as a way to guide the discussion.
- *How do you think keeping track of our diets can help us make healthier choices?*
  Students may mention that they paid more attention to what they ate or other
  ways this activity can help them.
- *How could we use this information to set nutrition goals for ourselves?*
  Introducing this concept will help set up the more advanced *Goal-Setting
  Calendar* activity.

**CLEAN UP**

- If necessary, gather activity materials and put back in appropriate locations.
Research has shown that one component of effective nutrition education is focusing on behaviors rather than nutrition facts alone. By creating clear links between the importance of healthy choices and students’ own experiences, activities that engage students in examining their diets bring the message of nutrition education home in an interactive, memorable manner.

In addition, family involvement is an important factor in children’s choices, and activities in which they collect information on their diets throughout the day also necessarily connect students’ home environments with what they learn at school.

While adults can offer nutrition experiences that reinforce good eating habits, provide mostly healthful food choices, and model good eating practices, the decision to put nutrition knowledge into practice ultimately lies with each child.

This activity empowers children by allowing them to monitor themselves as a precursor to setting their own goals, reinforcing that they have control over their own health and nutrition. The Goal-Setting Calendar activity provides students with the next step, asking them to build on this information and take concrete action based on their own assessments of their choices.
SIZING UP MY DIET
Pocket Tally

DIRECTIONS
1. Cut out the pocket tallies on the next page. Staple them together and put them in a handy place so you will remember to record what you eat.

2. Each time you eat or drink, write the name of the food or beverage on your pocket record. Next, place a tally mark in the correct food group. For example, if you had cereal, yogurt and juice for breakfast, place tally marks in the Grain, Milk and Fruit groups.

   The MyPyramid: What Kids Need to Eat Each Day chart on page 16 will help you to decide where to place foods and calculate the number of servings in the food group categories.

   At the end of each day, answer the questions at the bottom of this page.

EXEMPLARY

HOW DID I DO TODAY?
1. Did I eat breakfast?
2. Did I eat the suggested number of servings from each group?
3. Did I make progress on a personal nutrition goal?

   Explain ____________________________________________________________
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