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Lesson Goals
After this lesson, participants will:
• Describe the benefits of planning menus.
• Plan a week’s menu for the family using foods that meet her family’s nutritional needs and money available.
• Make a shopping list based on menus for the week.
• Describe ways to make meals attractive and appealing.

Before Teaching the Lesson
1. Read carefully:
   • A Guide to Planning Meals that Meet the Family’s Needs (NEP-208)
   • Menu Planning (NEP-208A)
   • Menu Planner and shopping list (NEP-208B)
2. Check the homemaker’s “24-Hour Food Recall Record” and Behavior Checklist.
   • Does she plan menus for her family’s meals?
   • Does she serve a variety of economical and nutritious foods?
3. Collect the materials or tools you will need to teach the lesson.
4. Refer to the Food and nutrition calendar for the best food buys of the month. Be prepared to discuss how best buys can be incorporated into participants’ meal plans.
5. Plan how you will teach the lesson.

Teaching Tools
For the homemaker:
• A Guide to Planning Meals that Meet the Family’s Needs (NEP-208)
• Menu Planning (NEP-208A)
• Menu Planner and shopping list (NEP-208B)
• MyPyramid Worksheet (NEP-201C)
• PowerPoint® presentation “A Guide to Better Meal Planning” or flip chart
• Food models or pictures of foods cut from magazines (10 to 12 examples of foods from each of the food groups)
• Nutrient comparison cards
• Cookbooks
• Food and nutrition calendar
• NEP recipe cards
• Food Stamp Nutrition Connection Recipe Finder (http://www.nal.usda.gov/recipes.php)
• Seasonal Menus (NEP-SBB101-104)

For youth:
• Fantastic Foods 4-H Curriculum:
  - “You’re the Chef” (7th-9th grades)
  - “Foodworks” (10th-12th grades)

Lesson Points to Stress
1. Planning meals ahead can help you:
   • Meet your family’s needs for energy and nutrients.
   • Provide appealing, balanced meals.
   • Save money at the grocery store.
   • Waste less food by using leftovers and foods on hand.
   • Add variety to your meals.
   • Create an inviting mealtime for family to share.
2. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Dietary Guidelines will help you plan meals that include all the foods your family needs.
3. Start your menu planning with the main meal. Then decide what to have for lunch and breakfast.
4. Plan menus for one week at a time. Save your menus and reuse them.
5. Consider leftovers and food on hand when planning menus.
6. Menus should be flexible enough to take advantage of grocery store specials and good food buys.
7. Snacks can be part of the family food plan. They can help meet additional food needs of some family members. However, snacks and desserts are not always needed.
8. If you or other family members are trying to lose weight, plan meals with foods that are lower in calories.
9. Including nutritious foods is important when planning meals. But there are other factors to consider:
   • A pleasing combination of colors
   • Foods with different textures – soft, firm, crunchy, chewy
   • Variety of shapes
   • Variety of flavors
   • Some hot and some cold foods
You should remember not to repeat the same food in a meal. For example, don’t serve peas and carrots with a carrot and raisin salad.
10. Periodically plan to include a new or different food or a familiar food prepared in a new or different way. Then meals won’t get boring. Remember: Variety is the key in planning and preparing meals.
Ideas for Teaching the Lesson

1. Before teaching the lesson, review what you taught the homemaker on your last visit.
   • What information has she used?
   • What new things has she tried?
2. Discuss the number of portions the homemaker needs daily from each food group. Repeat this for every member of her family. Use MyPyramid Worksheet (NEP 201C).
3. Have the homemaker use food models or pictures to plan a breakfast, lunch, and dinner for her family. Have her select some snacks if needed. Ask the homemaker if her meal plan, including snacks, meets the suggested daily portions from MyPyramid for her and her family.
4. Have the homemaker complete Menu Planning (NEP-208A).
   • Ask the homemaker whether her family likes the foods in her menu plan. Help her to make changes, if necessary.
   • Use the menu checklist to evaluate her menu. Suggest changes, if necessary.
   • Discuss the cost of foods in the day’s menu. Can you suggest other foods that would cost less?
5. Ask the homemaker to plan menus for the rest of the week. Give her a copy of NEP-208B. Tell her you will check the menus during your next visit.
6. Help the homemaker make a shopping list based on a week of menus. Use NEP-208B.
7. Provide the homemaker with a copy of “Seasonal Menus” available from the NEP Web site. Review these with her.

Idea for Teaching Small Groups

Have the group evaluate one or more of the sample menus. Use the checklist in Menu Planning (NEP-208A). Ask the group to suggest improvements, including ways to reduce costs. Use the menu checklist to evaluate the revised menu(s).

How to Tell What the Homemaker(s) Learned

Immediately following the lesson:
• Ask each homemaker to tell you the advantages of meal planning.
• Show the homemaker pictures of several meals that lack variety in color, shape, texture, etc. Ask the homemaker to tell you what is wrong with the meals and to suggest ways to make the meals more attractive and appealing.
• Using food models and NEP-208A, have the homemaker plan a day’s menu suitable for her family.

At a later visit:
• Ask the homemaker if she planned any menus.
• If so, check to see if she included foods from all food groups.
• Ask the homemaker if she used any of the menus.
• Did her menus include a variety of foods from each food group?
• Were her choices suited to budget?
• If she planned no menus, discuss why and encourage her to do so before your next visit.

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Menu 1 | Menu 2 | Menu 3
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**Breakfast** | | |
Fried eggs (2) | Toast with butter and jelly | No breakfast
Bacon | Coffee
Biscuits (2) | Coffee
Gravy | Coffee
Coffee

**Lunch** | | |
Fried fish sandwich with tartar sauce | Fried chicken Instant mashed potatoes Gravy Green beans Slaw 2% Milk | Whopper® French fries Large cola
Sliced tomato and lettuce
French fries
Coffee

**Dinner** | | |
Fried chicken Instant mashed potatoes Gravy Green beans Slaw Pecan pie with whipped topping Tea | Fried chicken Instant mashed potatoes Gravy Bread Regular cola
Fried chicken Instant mashed potatoes Gravy Bread Regular cola
Pecan pie with whipped topping Tea

**Snacks**

**Midmorning**
- No Snack
- Donut
- Donut

**Midafternoon**
- Twinkie®
- Diet cola
- No Snack

**Evening**
- Ice cream
- Ice cream