



PROMOTING BALANCED DIETS FEATURING KEY NUTRIENTS

Consuming a balanced diet that includes a wide variety of nutritious foods is always advised, but ensuring proper nutrition is even more critical when dealing with lead exposure. The [2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (Dietary Guidelines or DGAs) provide important guidance to help Americans make healthy food and beverage choices. [Choose MyPlate](#) presents this guidance in easy-to-understand language that can help people to adopt healthy habits.

In addition to an all-around healthy diet, consuming vitamin C, iron, and calcium is especially important for those in an area impacted by lead exposure. These three key nutrients have been shown to help limit the absorption of lead by the body. These nutrients can be obtained by eating certain foods, such as:

- **Vitamin C** – fruits, especially citrus; vegetables including red and green peppers
- **Iron** – beans, peanut butter, lean meat and poultry, whole grains
- **Calcium** – low-fat / fat-free milk (or calcium-fortified non-dairy milk such as soy milk), yogurt, or cheese; leafy green vegetables

A variety of FNS programs can be leveraged to help families in need meet the Dietary Guidelines and obtain foods that are rich in the three key nutrients. Many of these programs also educate participants in affected areas on how to select, prepare, and consume the foods they need to maintain a healthy diet inclusive of the key nutrients. For more information about these programs and others, visit the FNS [website](#). To achieve the maximum benefit of these nutrition assistance programs, anyone living, working, and/or attending school in an area affected by lead exposure who is eligible for one or more of these programs is encouraged to apply.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

[SNAP](#) provides eligible low-income individuals and families with a monthly allotment to use on food purchases at authorized stores and farmers markets. Eligible individuals and families in areas affected by lead exposure should be encouraged to use this allotment to purchase nutritious foods, including those high in the key nutrients described above. Some locations have “[Double Up Food Bucks](#)” or similar programs, which double the value of SNAP benefits at farmers markets, allowing participants to purchase more healthy foods containing the key nutrients.

Through SNAP’s Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program ([SNAP-Ed](#)), States receive grant funding to provide nutrition education to participants that can help them make healthy choices on a tight budget. In areas affected by lead exposure, States can use this program to raise awareness of the importance of good nutrition and teach participants how to incorporate foods high in the key nutrients into their diets. For example, in Flint, Michigan, one of the [agencies](#) that implements SNAP-Ed created a

two-page fact sheet and distributed it throughout the area in a variety of languages. It also developed a recipe booklet featuring foods that are good sources of the key nutrients and held workshops for families.

States can also use SNAP-Ed funding on interventions that increase access to foods rich in nutrients key to combatting lead exposure through policy, systems, and/or environmental change.

In addition, [SNAP-Ed Connection](#), an online resource center for State and local SNAP-Ed personnel, features a variety of helpful government resources on lead exposure and nutrition for educators and citizens alike. There are features articles on lowering a child's lead levels, preventing lead poisoning among pregnant women, cost-effective recipes featuring the key nutrients, and more.

Child Nutrition Programs

FNS's [child nutrition programs](#) – including the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Meals Programs, among others – help ensure kids and teens have access to nutritious meals all year long. Because of children's increased susceptibility to the effects of lead, these programs are a vital part of addressing lead exposure. When responding to a lead exposure crisis, there are many ways to leverage child nutrition programs:

- **Serving nutritious meals featuring the key nutrients:** The current school nutrition standards require that school breakfasts and lunches meet the Dietary Guidelines and contain foods from a variety of food groups. The [Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) (CACFP) also recently updated its nutrition standards to more closely align with the Dietary Guidelines. Therefore, children should be encouraged to take advantage of the meals and snacks they receive through these programs to help promote a nutritious diet. Furthermore, schools may consider introducing practices that boost participation to increase students' intake of these nutritious foods. For breakfast, consider breakfast in the classroom or grab n' go options. At lunch, try the [Smarter Lunchroom Strategies](#) or get kids involved in taste testing new recipes.

Taking it a step further, school nutrition professionals and child care providers can plan menus that specifically emphasize or increase offerings of food groups that are particularly high in the key nutrients such as whole grains; dark green, red/orange vegetables; and citrus fruits. In addition, schools participating in the [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program](#), a program for elementary schools with the highest free and reduced price enrollment, can leverage the program to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables high in key nutrients.

- **Ensuring access:** All eligible schools and districts in affected areas are encouraged to participate in the [Community Eligibility Provision](#) (CEP). CEP is a cost-sharing partnership between the Federal government and eligible schools or districts in lower-income areas that allows schools to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to *all* students. This eliminates stigma for students receiving free or reduced-price meals, reduces administrative burden for schools and parents, and

ensures children get the meals they need. In regions affected by lead exposure, the widespread access to nutritious meals and key nutrients in low income areas afforded through CEP is critical.

Parents and guardians of children attending schools that do not participate in CEP may be able to lessen the cost for their family by applying for free or reduced priced meals. They can contact their district for more information on how to apply.

- **Extending meal service beyond the school day:** Areas affected by lead exposure can maximize opportunities for children and teens to consume healthy meals containing the key nutrients by expanding meal service beyond the school day. First, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) may cover snacks and/or suppers for children participating in afterschool care programs.

Second, USDA's [summer meals programs](#) help fill the need for healthy, nutrient-rich meals when school lets out for summer. Through the summer meals programs, USDA reimburses summer meals sites that provide meals at no cost to children in low income areas. However, we rely on communities to host and sponsor the sites. Potential sites and/or sponsors should visit our [website](#) and contact their State agency for more information. Summer meals programs also rely on champions to help get the word out about the availability of summer meals; communities affected by lead exposure are encouraged to leverage their partnerships to help raise awareness of local summer sites.

- **Educating children and families:** Child nutrition programs can help ensure kids and teens have access to nutritious meals; however, just as important is educating and empowering them to make healthy choices all day long. Teachers, care providers, school nutrition professionals, and summer sites can all help provide nutrition education.

FNS's Team Nutrition supports the child nutrition programs in promoting healthy eating and an active lifestyle. They offer a host of free, publicly available materials on their website. School nutrition professionals, day care providers, summer site sponsors and others can use these materials to help teach children the importance of good nutrition, which may help address issues associated with lead exposure.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

[WIC](#) provides a monthly food package to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum mothers, infants, and children up to age 5 who are considered nutritionally at-risk. Because this population is particularly vulnerable to the effects of lead in the body, good nutrition is even more important. Many foods that are sources of the key nutrients are available through the WIC food package.

In addition, personalized [nutrition education](#) is a key part of WIC's services. Participants receive coaching strategies to optimize nutrition for themselves and their families through one-on-one sessions

in person or on the phone, online seminars, and/or group education sessions. This is an excellent opportunity to provide information and strategies to participants on how to use nutrition as a tool to mitigate the effects of lead in the body.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

[TEFAP](#) helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans, including the elderly, by providing emergency food assistance at no cost to participants. TEFAP purchases a variety of nutritious USDA Foods and makes them available to State Distributing Agencies, who then distribute to food banks or other local organizations that provide food to low-income families. Foods containing the key nutrients may be available through TEFAP; nutrition information for all USDA foods is available [online](#).

The Food Distribution Program for Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

[FDPIR](#) provides USDA Foods to eligible households living on Indian reservations. Many foods that are sources of the key nutrients are available through the FDPIR food package; nutrition information for all USDA foods is available [online](#).

LINKS (in order of appearance)

2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans - <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/2015-2020-dietary-guidelines-americans>
Choose MyPlate - <http://www.choosemyplate.gov>
FNS Website - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/>
SNAP - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>
[Double Up Food Bucks](http://www.doubleupfoodbucks.org/national-network/) - <http://www.doubleupfoodbucks.org/national-network/>
SNAP-Ed - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/nutrition-education>
Flint Michigan Agency - http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/eat_healthy_to_prevent_lead_poisoning
SNAP-Ed Connection - <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/resource-library/lifestyle-nutrition/lead-poisoning-and-nutrition>
Child Nutrition Programs - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/child-nutrition-programs>
CACFP - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program>
Smarter Lunchroom Strategies - <https://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/healthierus-school-challenge-resources/smarter-lunchrooms>
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ffvp/fresh-fruit-and-vegetable-program>
Community Eligibility - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/community-eligibility-provision>
Summer Meals Programs - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program>
Summer Food Service Program Fact Sheet - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sfsp/SFSP-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
WIC - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/women-infants-and-children-wic>
WIC Nutrition Education – <https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/nutrition-education>
TEFAP - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/emergency-food-assistance-program-tefap>

Nutritional Information for USDA Foods - <http://www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/fdd/household-material-fact-sheets>
FDPIR - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdpir/food-distribution-program-indian-reservations-fdpir>