

Manager's Corner

Dark Green Vegetables in School Meals

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PURPOSE

Improve the operation of child nutrition programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination.

VISION

Lead the nation in providing research, education, and resources to promote excellence in child nutrition programs.

MISSION

Provide relevant research-based information and services that advance the continuous improvement of child nutrition programs.

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Professional Standards

GENERAL NUTRITION – 1300

Employee will be able to understand the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, USDA's food guidance system concepts, and general nutrition principles.

1310 – Dietary Guidelines for Americans, MyPlate, and School Nutrition
Relate the Dietary Guidelines and USDA's food guidance system (such as MyPlate) concepts to the goals of school nutrition programs.

1320 – General Nutrition
Understand general nutrition concepts that relate to school meals, such as whole grains, sodium, etc.

Introduction

Manager's Corner: Dark Green Vegetables in School Meals is designed to empower managers to use in training their staff. Each lesson is roughly 15 minutes. This lesson plan contains:

- Learning objective
- Statement explaining the importance of the topic
- List of materials
- Instructions on how to present the information
- Questions to ask staff
- An activity to strengthen or refresh the knowledge of the staff

Lesson Overview

Instructions for lesson:

- Provide staff a copy of the ICN Meal Plan Mini Posters Dark Green Vegetables mini-poster (located at <https://theicn.org/icn-resources/>). Select Meal Pattern Mini-Posters and choose the mini-poster from the listing. Encourage staff to refer to these posters when answering the questions listed.
- Review the lesson objective and background information.
- Review why it is important.
- Ask staff the questions.
- Facilitate the activity outlined.
- Provide time for staff to ask questions.

Objective: Identify food sources, nutrients, health benefits, and menu suggestions for dark green vegetables.

Background information: Dark green vegetables provide a significant amount of vitamin K. Dark green vegetables also contain:

- Vitamins A, C, and E
- B vitamins like folate
- Large quantities of carotenoids-antioxidants
- Iron
- Fiber
- Magnesium
- Calcium
- Potassium

Food sources for dark green vegetables include Swiss chard, spinach, mustard greens, turnip greens, collards, broccoli, romaine lettuce, dark green leafy lettuce, and kale.

These vegetables provide the following health benefits.

- Contain cancer reducing agents
- Support heart health
- Boost bone health
- Aid digestive health
- Contributes to weight management

Why it is important: The dark green vegetables subgroup is a requirement of federally funded school lunch meals, and it provides many health benefits to children.

It is also important to recognize what nutrients these foods supply in meals as well as the health benefits provided when eaten.

Questions for Staff

- **What are dark green vegetable food sources?**

Answer: Food sources for dark green vegetables include Swiss chard, spinach, mustard greens, turnip greens, collards, broccoli, romaine lettuce, dark green leafy lettuce, and kale.

- **What nutrients do dark green vegetables contain?**

Answer: When compared with the other vegetable subgroups, dark green vegetables provide a significant amount of vitamin K. Dark green vegetables also contain:

- Vitamins A, C, and E
- B vitamins like folate
- Large quantities of carotenoids-antioxidants
- Iron
- Fiber
- Magnesium
- Calcium
- Potassium

- **What are the health benefits of consuming dark green vegetables?**

Answer:

- Contains cancer reducing agents
- Supports heart health
- Supports bone health
- Supports digestive health
- Contributes to weight management

Activity: Menu Item Suggestions

Activity materials included in this document:

No supplemental materials are included in this document.

Materials provided by the school nutrition operation:

- Copies of the *ICN Meal Plan Mini Posters Dark Green Vegetables* mini-poster (located at <https://theicn.org/icn-resources/>). Select **Meal Pattern Mini-Posters** and choose the mini-poster from the listing.
- Sample menu copies

Activity Instructions:

- Divide the staff into small groups.
- Ask the staff, "What are some ways dark green vegetables can be included on the menus?"

After completing the activity, ask the staff to share some of their suggestions and preparation ideas.

Example responses:

- Broccoli Slaw
- Spinach Egg Bake
- Kale Smoothies

Please note: The answers provided are only examples and are not an inclusive list of possible responses.

References

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2018). *Meal pattern mini-posters: Dark green vegetables*. Retrieved from <https://theicn.org/resources/905/meal-pattern-mini-posters/109666/icn-meal-plan-mini-posters-dark-green-vegetables.pdf>

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