

Welcome to the Nurture Family Program! This introduction will address the following:

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Where is the Nurture Family Program on the Nurture Website?

Go to <http://www.nurtureyourfamily.org/>

Hover over “**Resources**”

Hover over “**Family Program Curricula**”

Click on “**Nurture Family Program**”

Nurture Family Program Overview

The Nurture Family Program is a series of four nutrition, fitness, and cooking classes designed to help low-income families easily prepare delicious, healthy, low-cost meals. It emphasizes actionable information.

The Family Program includes Adults and Children curricula which are integrated but can be taught separately. Each Adults' class includes exercise and nutrition lessons plus two or more recipes for tasting. Adults' topics include Fruits & Vegetables, Whole Grains, Lean Protein, Sodium, Portion Control, Breakfast and Home Cooking Strategies. Each Children's class includes a nutrition lesson, exercise and games and two recipes they make. Children topics include USDA's MyPlate, Go & Slow Foods, Beverages and Breakfast.

As designed, each family receives a slow cooker, meat thermometer and workbook with healthy recipes, exercise routines and cooking, nutrition and fitness information. After each class, families receive a small bag of groceries containing nutritious ingredients such as beans, lentils, brown rice, oatmeal, and fresh fruits and vegetables, so they can immediately try new recipes at home.

As a result of Nurture Family Programs, the majority of participants

- Consume more beans, lentils, whole grains, fruits and vegetables
- Prepare foods using healthier preparation methods
- Increase or maintain prior high levels of physical activity
- Spend less money on food or stretch food dollars
- Improve their energy or health
- Increase confidence in their ability to create healthy meals their family will enjoy

These behaviors are important because they

- Reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and hypertension
- Lower the risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- Help to battle obesity
- Lead to increased life span and establish lifelong healthy habits

If your budget or circumstances make it challenging to use the program as designed, feel free to use the components of the program that fit your needs.

Addressing Why Families Don't Prepare Healthier Meals

The Nurture Family Program is designed to address three primary reasons people give for not preparing healthier meals.

1. "I don't know how to cook healthy meals."

During the Nurture Family Program participants are exposed to simple recipes and ways of preparing wholesome whole foods like whole grains, beans, lentils, fruits and vegetables. No chef hats required! We also teach participants how to adapt recipes using Nurture's Recipe Framework[®].

2. "Healthy cooking takes too long."

In addition to learning simple recipes, participants learn to use slow cookers so they can assemble a healthy meal in the morning when their energy is high. The Nurture Family Program shows families that they can enjoy a healthy, delicious meal at the end of a busy day instead of grabbing nutritionally poor convenience foods for dinner.

3. "Healthy foods are too expensive."

Nurture promotes the use of economical whole foods such as brown rice, barley, beans, lentils, fruits and vegetables. We also provide strategies for shopping, budgeting, food storage, and leftover repurposing. Nurture recipes are designed to fit within the budget of low-income families.

Cultural Sensitivity

The nutrition and exercise content of the Nurture Family Program is culturally neutral and has proven appealing to a wide range of audiences. Recipe selection is the primary method for customizing the program for different audiences. Please view [Recipe Selection and Grocery Giveaways](#) for how to achieve this.

Teaching Nutrition and Fostering a Collaborative, Open Environment

The [Coach and Cook Training Guide](#) provides more information on nutrition topics, the Recipe Framework, slow cookers and rice cookers, food sanitation and teaching tips.

In the state of Illinois, unlicensed individuals are able to share general nutrition information but are prohibited from:

1. Providing medical advice
2. Offering nutritional counseling
3. Diagnosing a nutrition related condition

Strive for interactive and fun lessons! The coach's role is to lead a discussion and share information. Participant suggestions and comments may be helpful to everyone in the group, including the coach.

Adults' Topics

Nurture Family Program contains lesson scripts. Here are the highlights of each topic:

- **Exercise:** motivate participants to be physically active and to provide suggestions for how to fit exercise into daily life, even in locations that limit outdoor activity or small spaces.
- **Fruits and Vegetables:** ways to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into meals and snacks and why they are important.
- **Whole Grains:** how to identify whole grains, how to prepare them, and that they provide fiber. The importance of fiber.
- **Lean Proteins:** the importance of eating lean proteins, the economic and nutrition advantages of plant based proteins, and how to prepare beans and lentils.
- **Breakfast:** why it is so important and easy breakfast ideas.
- **Home cooking:** healthy recipe substitutions, shopping strategies and leftovers tips.
- **Slow Cookers:** how to use them, safety considerations and product registration.
- **Portion Control:** what is portion control, why is it important and portion control strategies.

Children Topics

Each lesson contains a script with suggestions for how to teach each topic. Here are the highlights of what we are striving to achieve with each topic.

- **Exercise:** motivate children to be physically active and to provide suggestions for how to fit exercise into daily life. Being physically active is fun!
- **MyPlate:** what are the food groups and how do they help us, how to use MyPlate to build balanced meals.
- **Go and Slow Foods:** Go Foods nourish our bodies and provide long lasting energy. Slow Foods may provide a quick burst of energy but then make us sleepy because they don't nourish our bodies as well. Slow Foods are generally high in sodium, sugar and/or unhealthy fats. Know how to sort foods by Go and Slow and be able to suggest Go Food alternatives for Slow Foods.
- **Breakfast:** why it is important and how to build a balanced breakfast.
- **Beverages:** why it's important to stay hydrated, why water is the best choice, nutritional profiles for milk, 100% juice, sports drinks and soda.
- **Cooking Skills:** how to read a recipe, safety tips, keeping it clean, and basic recipe preparation.

Implementation

The [Program Manager Training Guide](#) explains the steps needed to conduct a successful program.

Providing a Nurture Family Program requires filling these key roles:

1. **Program Manager** – this person schedules the classes; tracks participants attendance; manages waivers and evaluations; purchases the giveaways; and compiles and report program outcomes. This person also serves the food during class or finds a volunteer to do this.
2. **Adults' Coach** – this person leads the lesson and discussions, including how to prepare the recipes.
3. **Children's Coach** – this person leads the lesson, discussions and food preparation. More than one coach may be needed depending on the age range, the number and the energy level of the children. Assistants to help with cooking and clean-up are very helpful.

Timing of classes. We have found conducting all four classes within a four to five week time span yields the highest participant attendance. If you plan to space classes farther apart, consider giving the slow cooker away during the third or fourth class. Simply teach the Lean Protein and

Slow Cooker class during class 3 or 4 and advise the coach to adapt the lesson to review the prior class and preview of the next class accordingly. The tradeoff to giving the slow cooker out later in the series is that it may deter participants from using the slow cooker: they will have less opportunity to ask questions as they are learning to use it.

Hands-on or not. The Adults' classes do not include hands-on cooking. A third to half of all participants request hands-on cooking instruction. This is not built into the program because the cooking skills required to make Nurture recipes are limited to mainly washing and chopping food. If you wish to add this to the program, we suggest lengthening the program time and checking with your lawyers and insurance regarding the use of knives or other potentially dangerous cooking equipment.

Giveaways. Giveaways provide incentive for participants to attend each class.

1. Participant Workbook – this contains recipes and cooking, nutrition and exercise tips; provides a location for taking notes; and becomes a reference tool and cookbook for the future.
2. Slow cooker
3. Meat thermometer – if you are using a recipe that includes a large cut of meat or poultry, distribute the thermometer during that class so families will be able to test whether the food is fully cooked.
4. Groceries – at the end of each class distribute a small bag of groceries so families can start testing new recipes with limited financial risk.

Cooking. It is important to follow food sanitation guidelines when preparing food for participants to sample. Ideally these would be prepared in a commercial kitchen. These steps are important to prevent food borne illnesses.

Serving Sizes and Sample Sizes. During a typical class, participants will sample at least three recipes, sometimes more. While we don't want anyone to go away hungry, we don't want to ignore portion control guidelines either. Generally plan to provide samples that are 1/3 of a serving size when classes are conducted around meal time. Smaller samples are appropriate if classes are held between meals.

Children and Complexity. The Children's portion of the Family Program increases the complexity of providing a Nurture Family Program. Additional personnel are needed since the Children's classes include a lesson plus hands-on cooking and an active game and require adequate supervision. You may need more than one Children's coach depending upon the age range, the

number and the energy level of the children. If there are a lot of children, safety can become a concern if they aren't fully engaged.

Some of our partners choose to provide only the Adults' portion. Babysitting, as opposed to the Children's Program, is an option if parents must bring their children. If you choose to provide the Children's portion of the program, strive for at least one adult for every four children and plan in advance how children will be grouped to maximize learning potential.