

Nature, Science and Health



The Food Connection

Cheeseburgers. Milkshakes. Potato chips. Sound familiar? Even though there is a movement toward healthy eating, many people still eat fast food on the run. It's not always easy to make smart food choices. It's easier to pop and crunch. Learn more about making healthy food choices in this interest project.

Each interest project contains activities which are organized into four different categories: **Skill Builders, Technology, Service Projects, and Career Exploration.** By doing these activities, you will gain insights about yourself—your strengths and weaknesses, your likes and dislikes. You will have a range of new experiences, and you will develop valuable skills and expertise in specific areas. *To earn an interest project award, you must complete at least seven activities as follows: two Skill Builders activities; one Technology activity; one service project activity; one Career Exploration activity; Two activities from any category that you choose.*

Skill Builders

1. Familiarize yourself with the food pyramid found on next page. Plan a menu for your family for two weeks, choosing foods from the food pyramid. Substitute healthy foods, such as fruits, yogurt, and juice, for foods high in fat, sugar, salt, and caffeine. Discuss the menu with your family prior to trying it, then again at the end of the first week. Incorporate changes into the following week's menu.
2. Water is the perfect drink. Your body absolutely needs water and you get it in many forms. Almost all foods and beverages contain water. However, equip yourself with a water bottle and make a conscious effort to drink eight cups of water a day, the recommended daily amount. Do this for a two-week period. Do you notice a difference?
3. Find out about the role cholesterol plays in health. Learn about the difference between HDLs (high-density lipoproteins) and LDLs (low-density lipoproteins). Make a list of foods high in cholesterol or high in fats that are favorite foods for teens. Develop a list of substitutions. Find out how to read labels for fat content. Share your findings with friends and family.
4. Collect recipes on a theme of interest, such as vegetarian soups or sugar-free desserts. Illustrate the recipes and organize them into a cookbook. Share copies with interested people.

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5. Vitamins and minerals are essential to your well-being. They are in food and also available in vitamin supplements. Make a poster or chart that lists vitamins and minerals, their functions, and which foods contain them. Present your display at a troop or group meeting.

Technology

1. How large a role do media and advertising play in defining our body image? How might this create a climate for eating disorders? Discuss female body images and their relation to bulimia and anorexia nervosa (see pages 31-34 in *A Resource Book for Senior Girl Scouts*). Learn about these eating disorders. What are some of the symptoms? What should you do if you know someone who seems to have an eating disorder? Create a poster or awareness campaign to promote healthy body image.
2. Find at least five resources online to help maintain a healthy lifestyle. Key words might be *women's health, nutrition, food pyramid and exercise*.
3. Learn to see beyond food packaging by understanding content labels. Look for such information as serving size, fat content, and the presence of vitamins and minerals. Visit a grocery store and compare the packaging, contents, and price of at least four different products. Share what you learn with others.
4. What is insulin? What function does it have your body? Having diabetes means that your body doesn't make enough insulin or is unable to use the food you eat in the proper way. Learn about the two types of diabetes (Type 1 and Type 2). What are the warning signs of diabetes? Talk with someone who has diabetes? Talk with someone who has diabetes or works with diabetics. Find out about blood sugar levels and about diet.

Service Projects

1. Volunteer to help with a communitywide health fair. Or work as a volunteer for a fitness walk or run. Ensure that first aid, water, and high-energy, healthy snacks are available.
2. Create a puppet show or presentation for younger girls or the elderly that addresses healthy eating habits. Learn about nutrition needs for these two age groups.
3. Organize or participate in a food drive. Contact a local food bank, or see if your local Girl Scout council has an annual food drive and volunteer to be on the planning committee. If not, organize one with the help of a mentor.
4. Serve on a committee to make recommendations for school cafeteria or camp food. Be able to justify recommendations for changes based upon dietary needs and healthy alternatives to present fare. Consider cost per serving, government guidelines, and labor in planning these menus.
5. Learn about different foods that are eaten and not eaten for strongly held religious or dietary beliefs. This might include, for example, people of the Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or

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Sikh faiths, as well as vegetarians. Determine if events you attend are being inclusive or exclusive when it comes to food options. Work with a group to broaden food options for an organized group or event, such as a day camp, resident camp, school potluck gathering, or cultural festival.

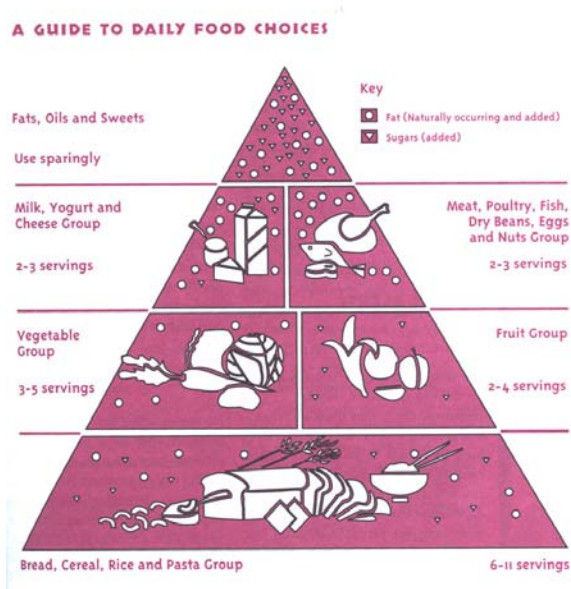
Career Exploration

1. Make a list of four to six careers related to food and then find out the following for two of these careers: skills and responsibilities; working conditions; training and education needed; earnings.
2. Agricultural science includes food science, plant science, animal science, and soil science. People with careers in these areas work to increase agricultural productivity, as well as to meet the nutritional needs of consumers. Write to a school specializing in one of those areas or visit its Web site. If possible, communicate with a student at the school. Find out what specific jobs are available upon graduation.
3. Dietitians work in hospitals, nursing homes, schools, or on their own as consultants. They promote healthy eating habits to prevent illness. Arrange to shadow a dietitian and see how she impacts people's lives. Find out about the training required for becoming a dietitian.
4. Interview two women who work in a health- or food-related career. If possible, choose someone who is working for herself, such as a nutritional consultant or the owner of a health food store, and someone who works for others, such as a chef or trainer at a health club.
5. Get firsthand experience in a food-related field by working part-time or during the summer in a food business.

And Beyond

If this interest project whetted your appetite, and to learn more about how the energy in food affects us, try these related interest projects:

Creative Cooking
Women's Health
From Fitness to Fashion
Planet Power
Eco-Action



This badge can be found in the book *Interest Projects for girls 11 - 17*, page 60. This text has been reproduced with permission from Girl Scouts of the USA—this document may not be copied or reproduced in any way.