People say, you need to eat protein, but what is it? Many foods contain protein. The best sources are beef, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, nuts, seeds, and legumes like black beans and lentils. Your muscles, your organs, and your immune system are made up mostly of protein.

Your body uses the protein you eat to make lots of specialized protein molecules that have specific jobs. For instance, your body uses protein to make hemoglobin.  That is the part of red blood cells that carries oxygen to every part of your body. Other proteins are used to build cardiac muscle. What's that? Your heart! In fact, whether you're running or just hanging out, protein is doing important work like moving your legs, moving your lungs, and protecting you from disease.

Food from animals, such as meat and milk, is called complete. Most vegetable protein is incomplete.  It does not give you as much protein as the animal foods. People who eat a vegetarian diet can still get what they need, they just need to eat a wide variety of protein-rich vegetable foods.

For instance,  if you have peanut butter on whole-grain bread you're set. Likewise, red beans won't give you everything you need, but red beans and rice will do the trick. The good news is that you don't have to eat all you need in every meal. As long as you have a variety of protein sources throughout the day, your body will grab what it needs from each meal.

You can figure out how much protein you need if you know how much you weigh. Each day, kids need to eat about 0.5 grams of protein for every pound they weigh. That's a gram for every 2 pounds you weigh. Your protein needs will grow as you get bigger, but then they will level off when you reach adult size. Adults, for instance, need about 60 grams per day.

You can look at a food label to find out how many protein grams are in a serving. But if you're eating a balanced diet, you don't need to keep track of it. It's pretty easy to get enough protein.

*Directions: Choose the best answer for each question*

| 1. Which of these are good sources of protein? | 2. Which of these is a complete food? |
|---|---|
| a. milk and beef | a. corn |
| b. meat and vegetables | b. tea |
| c. legumes and lettuce | c. peanut butter |
| d. apples and oranges | d. steak |

| 3. Which of these tells about proteins? | 4. Which of these is an incomplete food? |
|---|---|
| a. They make you pretty. | a. peanut butter and jelly |
| b. They make you healthy. | b. peanut butter on whole grain bread |
| c. They make you hungry. | c. red beans and rice |
| d. They make you incomplete. | d. cheeseburger and bun |

5. *Write your own answer to this question.*
   What are two ways to classify foods?  Why are they important to know?

_____

_____

**TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking**
These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses.  They are intended to exercise skills.  Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

***Answers:*** *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them*
*to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

| Item | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Answer | a | d | b | a |

Question 5 is open-ended.  Here is a suggested response.

5. Students should base their answer on the passage.  So it should include protein, such as complete and incomplete or high protein and low protein.

FICTION: The Food Change          Center for Urban Education ©2007

My mother took me to see the doctor.  I had been tired a lot.

The doctor checked my temperature.  She checked my heart.  Then she said, "What have you been eating?  Usually I find that when someone is tired they have a nutrition problem."

I said, we have breakfast at school and lunch, too.  I have milk and cereal for breakfast.  Then I eat whatever they have.

But what about dinner?  And week-ends?

My mother said, "I cook good food. But she won't eat it.  She wants to eat snacks.  She eats cookies and candy a lot.  Then when it's meal time, she leaves the food on her plate."

"Now wonder you're tired," the doctor said.  "You're a growing girl.  You need a good diet.  Haven't you heard of the food pyramid?"

"Yes, we studied that, but it's hard to get all those kinds of foods."

"It doesn't sound like that is the problem," she said.  Your mother is making good food.  And you're eating candy and cookies.  Do you know how much nutrition there is in those foods?  They aren't even on that pyramid.  Sugar gives you a burst of energy.  But they do not last.  You need to have a better diet.  You need good food to get your energy.  You need to eat meat, fruits, and vegetables."

When we left the doctor's office, my mother took a booklet.  It told what foods to eat  I knew it was going to be a bad time.

I reached in my pocket to get a candy, and my mother grabbed it.  She said that was the end of candy.  So I gave her the rest of the candy.  This was even worse than I thought.

On the way home, my mother bought carrots and raisins at the store.  She gave them to me when we got home.  I liked the raisins.  But I didn't like the carrots.

That night we had dinner.  I saw she had made a salad with raisins and carrots.  We had that with chicken and biscuits.  I decided this big change wasn't going to be so bad.

I still would like some candy, but I know that's not going to happen.

*Directions: Choose the best answer for each question*

| 6. What is a good source of energy? | 7. Which of these would not be on a good diet? |
|---|---|
| a. sugar | a. oranges |
| b. candy | b. hamburgers |
| c. oatmeal cookies | c. potato chips |
| d. meat | d. milkshakes |

| 8. What are good ways to classify foods when planning a diet? | 9. What is a kind of food that would help someone be healthy? |
|---|---|
| a. healthy and unhealthy | a. fatty |
| b. sweet and sour | b. high calorie |
| c. big meals and snacks | c. nutritious |
| d. main meal and dessert | d. snack |

10. *Write your own answer to this question.*
    What are three foods that should be part of a good diet?

    _____

    _____

    _____

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***Answers:*** *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

| Item | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Answer | d | c | a | c |

Question 10 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

10. Students may list foods mentioned in the passage or foods they know that are nutritious.