



MyPlate Activity Kit

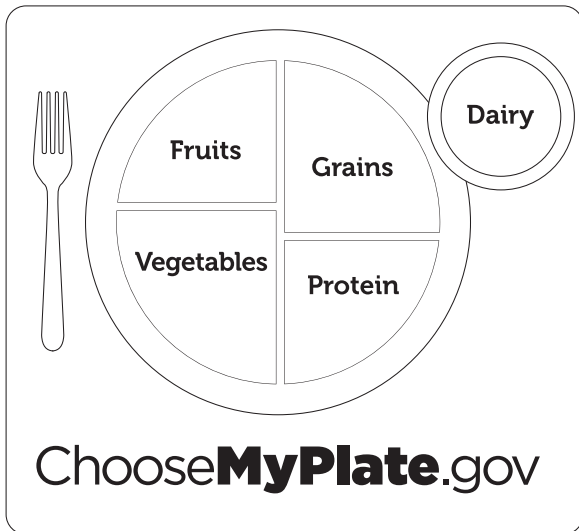
Background Information

I. About MyPlate:

Background

In June of 2011, First Lady Michelle Obama and the USDA unveiled MyPlate, the new generation nutrition icon for healthy eating. MyPlate adds on to the earlier MyPyramid concept by emphasizing a simple set of guidelines to help people put the healthiest choices on their plate.

MyPlate promotes the same five major food groups (with a few name changes), but emphasizes the importance of portion size, filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables, and making at least half your grains, whole grains. It reminds us to choose lean protein foods, go for calcium-rich, low-fat milks, yogurts, and cheeses, and replace soda and sugary drinks with water. It also encourages lower sodium choices.



How to Teach with MyPlate

This simple MyPlate icon is a fun image to use when teaching nutrition to your students. They can graphically see what makes up a healthy balanced meal, and recognize if they are eating from all five food groups, with mostly “GO foods” in appropriate portion sizes. As with MyPyramid, always try to put the spotlight on physical activity, encouraging children to have fun being active every day, for at least one hour. More is even better!

MyPlate Tips for Healthy Eating

Balancing Calories:

- * Enjoy your food, but eat less.
- * Avoid oversized portions.

Foods to Increase:

- * Make half of your plate fruits and vegetables.
- * Make at least half of your grains whole grains.
- * Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.

Food to Reduce:

- * Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals. Choose the foods with lower numbers.
- * Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

For more information about MyPlate, visit:

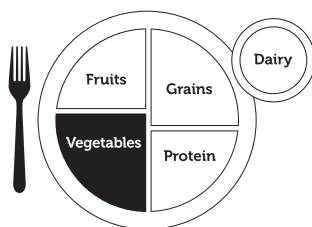
www.ChooseMyPlate.gov

For more fun food and nutrition activities and resources, visit:

www.foodplay.com

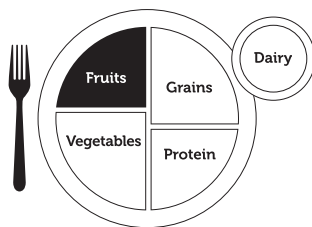
II. The Five Food Groups

Foods can be divided into five major food groups, with each group providing important sets of nutrients needed for our bodies to grow strong, keep healthy, and give us the energy we need for work and play. It's important that we try to eat a wide variety of foods from each good group throughout the day to make sure we satisfy our bodies' nutritional requirements. For more information about each food group, visit www.ChooseMyPlate.gov/foodgroups/index.html.



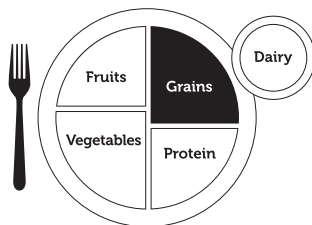
VEGETABLES provide essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber, which keep us healthy and are involved in all of the body's functions.

Examples: broccoli, peppers, spinach, carrots, potatoes, peas, sweet potatoes, kale, collard greens, string beans, squash, zucchini



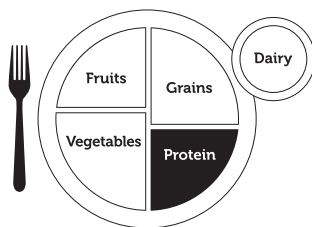
FRUITS are Mother Nature's sweet treats and provide vitamins, minerals, and fiber, along with carbohydrates for energy.

Examples: oranges, apples, grapes, pears, bananas, mango, strawberries, blueberries, watermelon, grapefruit, kiwi, papaya



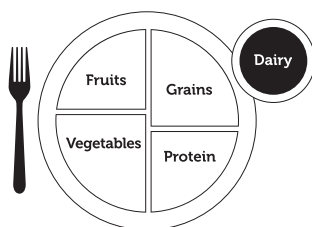
GRAINS (particularly **WHOLE GRAINS**) provide complex carbohydrates for longer lasting energy and fiber, along with important vitamins and minerals.

Examples: whole grain bread, whole wheat pasta, brown rice, oatmeal, shredded wheat, quinoa, barley, millet, bulgur, popcorn, amaranth



PROTEIN foods provide the raw materials to build our bodies. Protein is the building block for bones, muscles, cartilage, skin, and blood, as well as for enzymes, hormones, and vitamins.

Examples: lean choices of meat, baked chicken, grilled fish, veggie burgers, beans, nuts, seeds, eggs, tofu



DAIRY foods provide calcium, vitamin D, and protein for building strong bones and teeth.

Examples: low-fat yogurt, milks, and cheeses (and dark green leafy vegetables are also packed with calcium!)

III. GO Foods and WHOA Foods

Help Kids Develop Healthy Habits to Last a Healthy Lifetime!

Studies show that eating balanced diets rich in fresh fruits and vegetables, lean protein foods, whole grains, and calcium-rich foods, helps people stay healthy and prevent disease. In America, the leading causes of death and disease are related to our diet and exercise habits. Childhood obesity and diabetes caused by poor food choices and inactive lifestyle habits are increasing at alarming rates. Eating too much unhealthy fat can lead to high cholesterol levels, heart disease, and cancer. Eating too much sugar can cause tooth decay, weight gain, and diabetes. Eating too much salt can increase a person's risk of high blood pressure and stroke.

There are many ways to help children identify foods that support health and prevent disease, and to look out for those that contribute little in the way of nutrients but are rich in calories, fat, sugar, salt, and additives. At the elementary school level, we find that naming healthy foods "GO foods" and the less healthy foods "WHOA foods" is a good way to start the process.

GO FOODS are full of the nutrients we need to keep GOing strong, give us long-lasting energy, protect us from disease, and keep us healthy and energized. They tend to be whole foods, close to their natural state, with little added processing. GO foods also tend to be better for the health of the planet, as they use less resources and create less garbage. We should encourage our students to choose mostly GO foods and limit their intake of WHOA foods to only once in a while.

WHOA FOODS are products that are high in sugar, fat, salt, and/or additives. Generally, the more a food is processed, the more nutrients are stripped from the original food and the more sugar, fat, and salt are added. WHOA foods do not provide much nutritional value for the calories they contain. Unfortunately, it is the WHOA foods that are often most available and are highly advertised to children on TV and the internet. While children can eat these products once in a while, there isn't a lot of room for WHOA foods in a healthy, balanced diet. Your help in empowering kids to go for the GO foods and cut down on soda, sweetened drinks, candy, cookies, cakes, chips, fried foods, and high sodium foods will help them develop healthy habits that can last a lifetime!



IV. A Very Special Emphasis on Fruits and Veggies — Fill Half Your Plate!

Fruits and vegetables are a colorful and delicious way to power up your meals! They are full of nutrients that help our bodies grow and stay healthy. Because they are low in calories and high in nutritional value, they are said to be nutrient-dense. Fruits and vegetables contain fiber to keep our digestive tracts working efficiently and help us feel full, complex carbohydrates for energy, and vitamins and minerals that help in all our body's processes to keep us growing healthy and strong. Studies show that increasing our intake of fruits and vegetables can offer protection against cancer and heart disease, and helps keep us healthy and happy!

Fruits & Veggies — What are they good for? ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING!

Here are the major nutrients fruits and vegetables provide:

- **Vitamin C:** Vitamins A, C, and E are known as “antioxidants” which help prevent cell damage throughout the body. Vitamin C also aids in wound healing, and is needed for the synthesis of collagen, the cementing material that holds body cells together. Vitamin C helps the body resist infection, reduces the severity of colds, strengthens blood vessels, and keeps gums healthy. Studies also have shown that Vitamin C can help protect against certain types of cancers.
- **Vitamin A:** Also known as beta carotene (the form found in fruits and vegetables), Vitamin A helps us see in the dark! Beta carotene helps keep skin smooth and healthy, protects mucous membranes from infection, and helps maintain a strong immune system to protect against disease.
- **Vitamin E:** A major antioxidant, Vitamin E protects cells and fats in body tissues from deterioration during a wide variety of the body's chemical processes. It also protects the lungs from becoming damaged if breathing polluted air.
- **Calcium:** Calcium is the main structural component of bones and teeth, and is important in all the body's metabolic processes. Kids especially need to consume adequate amounts of calcium in their diet when young, because that is when bones are being built. The more calcium children get in their early years, the more will be stored in their bones, and the stronger their bones will be as they grow older. When the body isn't getting the calcium it needs from one's diet, it will take calcium from the bones, which can cause brittle bones or osteoporosis.
- **Iron:** We need iron to make hemoglobin, which carries oxygen in the blood. This oxygen is brought to other cells where it is used to give the cell power. Iron also assists in the synthesis of neurotransmitters (like dopamine and norepinephrine) which aid in sending signals from cell to cell. Without them, there would be no interaction between our neurons and the rest of the cells in the body.
- **Fiber:** Having fiber in the diet helps the body rid itself of wastes, and keeps one's intestines clean and bowel function regular. Fiber also provides bulk, helping to make us feel full when we eat a fiber-rich meal.

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