

# Balanced Diet

## Summary

Students will learn that the food they are eating contain a variety of things such as nutrients, vitamins, fats, and sugars.

## Materials

- Water gel
- Test tubes or other clear container
- Water
- Salt, sugar
- Nutritional labels from a variety of foods
- Teaspoon and funnel
- [Food Pyramid Chart](#) (pdf)
- [Food Group Chart](#) (pdf)
- Post-it® note pad

## Additional Resources

- *Food Rules*  
, by Bill Haduch; ISBN 0-14-131147-9
- *The Berenstain Bears and Too Much Junk Food*  
, by Stan and Jan Berenstain; ISBN 0-394-87217-7
- *D.W. the Picky Eater*  
, by Marc Brown; ISBN 0-316-10957-6 (hardcover), ISBN 0-316-11048-5 (paperback)
- *Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z*  
, by Lois Ehlert; ISBN 0-15-224435-2

## Background for Teachers

Students should have a basic understanding of the five food groups and how a balanced diet will keep them healthy.

They should:

- Be familiar with the food pyramid.
- Understand the different food groups.
- Be able to list foods from each category and graph them.
- Categorize their favorite simple food.
- Categorize their favorite complex food (e.g., pizza: crust from the grain group, tomato sauce/toppings from the vegetable group, toppings from the meat group, cheese from dairy group, toppings from the fruit group, etc.).

Remember:

- One serving of meat is the size of a deck of playing cards.
- One fruit serving is the size of a tennis ball.
- A slice of bread or a computer mouse-size scoop of rice or noodles is a serving size from the grain group.
- Vegetable servings are 1/2 cup cooked vegetables or 1 cup raw.
- A serving from the milk group is 1 cup of milk or 2 slices of cheese.

## Intended Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate a positive learning attitude.
4. Develop physical skills and personal hygiene.

6. Communicate clearly in oral, artistic, written, and nonverbal form.

### Instructional Procedures

#### Invitation to Learn

Do you know what is in the food you eat? Do you know what you are really eating? We always hear people talk about a balanced diet, but what does that mean?

#### Instructional Procedures

Review the five food groups with the children and show them a *Food Pyramid Chart*.

Ask children to name some of their favorite foods. Write the names of the food on Post-it® notes and place them in the correct food group, or generate a list of food groups on the board with their choices listed under the correct food category.

Graph each food group to determine which group they eat from the most or the least.

Explain how each food group gives our bodies different nutrients that are essential for our growth and development. Emphasize that too much from a group, or not enough, isn't healthy. That is why we call it a balanced diet.

Discuss the similarities and differences of each food.

Lead discussion into the fact that foods are made of more than one ingredient.

Foods that are made of more than one ingredient are okay to eat, but too much can lead to an unhealthy diet.

Give each child a copy of a nutritional label. (Make an overhead transparency, if possible, for teacher use.)

Look at food labels from a variety of foods.

Discuss the meaning of a serving for a child.

Identify how many servings are in a package.

Vitamin A, C, calcium, protein, and iron are important for our bodies to grow properly. Mention that not receiving all of the nutrients we need can lead to diseases such as scurvy (lack of Vitamin C) and osteoporosis (not enough calcium).

Identify fat grams, sodium, and sugars on the labels.

Select a label and explain you are going to show them how much sugar, salt and fat are in this product. To demonstrate, measure the amount of salt (sodium) in one test tube or container, the sugar in another, and the fat in a third using the water gel that has been mixed with water to form a spongy consistency. (You could already have this measured and in the bottles before the lesson.)

Emphasize that the amount listed under the sugar, salt and fat is for EACH SERVING, not each package. Some of these measurements may be doubled.

Record and graph sugar, salt, and fat in the foods. It is important to pay attention to what is on labels. You don't have to avoid these foods, but be informed and learn to make good choices about what you eat.

Move the discussion toward foods we really like to eat (e.g., chocolate, popcorn, candy, doughnuts, chicken nuggets, pizza, etc.). These foods have many added ingredients that are not good for our bodies if we eat too much of them.

Talk about how all of these are necessary for our bodies, but in moderation.

### Extensions

Graph the amount of sugar, salt, or fat in different foods from labels students have brought from home.

Write letters to different companies with either compliments or concerns about their products.

Write a reader's theater teaching how to eat a balanced diet and share with other classes.

Record what they eat in one day on the Food Group Chart. Have them cut out these foods from

colored paper and use them to create a self-portrait (e.g., carrots for legs, egg for the head, spaghetti for hair, potato for the body, apple slices for the ears, etc.). Proving you are what you eat.

#### Family Connections

Children can help plan a meal for their family that contains something from each food group. While shopping with their parents or guardians, students look at and compare nutrition labels of the same product, but different brand names. Students share the information they have learned with their families and help them make wise choices about the foods they are eating.

#### Assessment Plan

Give each child a food pyramid chart and cut-outs of different foods. Have him/her glue each piece in the correct category.

Give each child a few samples of nutrition labels and have him/her choose the most healthy and least healthy food based on sugar, fat, and sodium content.

#### Authors

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