

LESSON: The Food Groups (US)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Define the different food groups and explain their importance
- Understand, identify, and recall examples of healthy food items from each of the food groups
- Understand and describe the concept of healthy eating and why food is important for our bodies

LEVEL:



MATERIALS:

- Activity Sheet: Level 1 – Build a Bento Box Lunch (US)
- Activity Sheet: Level 1 – Matching Food Groups (US)
- PowerPoint: Level 1 – Food Groups (US)
- Quiz: Level 1 – Food Groups (US)

LESSON:

Starter: The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the idea of food, healthy eating, and nutrition, to bring students, grades JK-1, together and to have them start talking and thinking critically about these topics.

Section 1: What is Food? Why is it Important?

*Ask Class: What is food? Why is food important? *listen to response, build a definition together, recap and compare with the following**

Food is something that we eat and/or drink to provide us with energy (*energy* – you know when you feel ready for the day and powerful? That is energy). You need energy to run really fast! Food also helps us to get big and strong by giving our bodies everything they need to grow.

It is important that we eat good food to give our bodies everything they need to make them work! Your body is like a wind-up toy car and food is like the person winding up the car. Without someone winding up the car, then the car will have no energy to move anywhere! So, without fueling your body with food, you too will have no energy to move anywhere or perform your daily activities like running, jumping, and even thinking!

*Ask Class: What are some of your favorite foods? *listen to responses, re-group ideas to introduce topic of healthy foods**

So, we know what food is, and why it is important for our bodies – to help us grow big and strong, but what foods are best to choose more often? Do some foods have more energy and nutrients than others?

Let's talk about healthy eating!

Section 2: What is Healthy Eating? An Introduction to Nutrition

Healthy eating is about eating the right amount of foods that we love, but what foods should we be eating more often?

We want to eat food that gives us **energy** and something we call **NUTRIENTS** (*Nutrients* - things in food that help us grow and help our bodies to function properly).

We want to make the **most of the food** we eat, foods full of nutrients. Foods like fruits, vegetables, fish, and whole grain bread are good examples of foods that we want to eat most of the time. These foods will help us to be healthy and strong.

But sometimes we want a treat, right? Treats are okay, we like treats, but we only want to eat these foods sometimes. Meaning, it is okay to eat them once in a while, but we do not want to be having them all the time.

If we do not eat enough of the foods that are full of nutrients, it is harder for our bodies to work properly! So, let's limit treat food to make room for food full of nutrients that help our bodies work well!

*Ask Class: Do you know any foods that we would consider to be foods we want to eat once in a while or less of? *open discussion with examples given, then transition**
**List: Cookies, Cake, Donuts, Chocolate, Chips, Deep Fried Food, Soda, Candy, etc.*

These foods often have fewer nutrients in them, so remember, they are okay to enjoy sometimes, but we want to make sure that most of our meals are full of foods with lots of nutrients.

Section 3: Food Groups

We talked about what food is, what it does for our bodies, and the difference between foods full of nutrients and foods we only want to eat sometimes, but how do we make a balanced healthy meal?

Let's take a look and learn about the different food groups!

Grains:

What are grains? Grains are a food group that provides our bodies with ENERGY. Grains have nutrients that help give both our bodies and our brains the energy to exercise and think! When choosing grains, we want to choose WHOLE GRAINS more often because whole grains have the WHOLE grain which gives us more nutrients. We want to try to make at least half of the grains we are eating whole grains.

Ask Class: Can you give some examples of grains?

**List: crackers, bread, pancakes, biscuits, pasta, tortillas, bagels, etc.*

Ask Class: Can you give some examples of whole grains?

**List: whole oats, whole grain: pasta/bread/brown rice/cereal/crackers/pitas, quinoa*

Proteins:

What is protein? Protein is a nutrient we get from food that helps to build our muscles and our bones! It is important to have strong muscles so that our bodies can move, run, jump, and exercise!

Fun Fact: Did you know that our hair is also made up of protein?

Now that you know how important protein is for our bodies, can anyone tell me where we get our protein from?

Ask Class: Which foods do you think have a lot of protein?

**List: eggs, meat, poultry, nuts/seeds, fish/seafood, beans, peas, tofu, soy*

Fruits & Vegetables:

Fruits and vegetables are very important because inside them are many VITAMINS and MINERALS. Vitamins and minerals are very important for our skin, eyesight, and our blood. They also help us to grow and can help to keep us from getting sick!

Ask Class: What are your favorite fruits and vegetables?

**List: apples, bananas, peaches, grapes, cherries, oranges, broccoli, carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, etc.*

Did You Know: Peas and beans can also be in the Fruits and Vegetables food group!

Dairy:

What is the Dairy food group? Dairy is food made from milk! Foods from the Dairy group are important because they help to keep our bones and teeth STRONG!

Ask Class: Can you name some foods in the Dairy food group?

**List: Milk, yogurt, cheese, and plant-based milks!*

Summary: Wrap-up and Take-Home Points

It is important to eat a variety of foods from the different food groups (Grains, Proteins, Fruits & Vegetables, and Dairy) to give your body everything it needs to grow and be strong. Make **half** your plate **Fruits and Vegetables** – choosing vegetables more often! Make **one quarter** of your plate **Proteins** and the other **quarter** of your plate **Grains**, choosing whole grain foods at least half the time. Have **Dairy** in your diet! For a refreshing drink, choose water often! Water will help to keep you hydrated throughout the day.

Educators Note: For further facilitation, use the assigned quiz to recap the key concepts and test knowledge learned in this lesson.

Adapted from: MYPLATE.GOV

REFLECTION NOTES: