

## 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 4 – Menu Activity (US)
- Activity Sheet: Level 4 – Grain Infographic (US)
- Activity Sheet: Level 4 – Produce for Kids BINGO
- PowerPoint: Level 4 – Food Groups (US)
- Quiz: Level 4 – 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 7-8, 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? \*listen to response, build a definition together, recap and compare with the following\**

Food is a nutritious substance we eat and/or drink that provides us with energy and contains essential nutrients to allow the cells in our bodies to grow and to support all our body's functions.

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 includes:

- 1) Eating the right amount of food that your body needs several times each day;
- 2) Choosing whole foods more often, and limiting processed foods;
- 3) Creating recipes that taste good to you; and
- 4) Eating foods that give you energy and nutrients to help your body function properly.

We want to make the **most of the food** we eat. Focusing on foods full of nutrients – *Nutrient Dense* foods. Foods like fruits, vegetables, fish, and whole grain bread are good examples of nutrient dense foods that we want to eat most of the time.

But sometimes we want a food that is less nutrient dense, right? For example, chips or ice cream or cookies. *Treat foods* often have large amounts of added sugar, salt (sodium), and trans fat. Eating foods with a high amount of these ingredients can cause you to feel tired, cause your body to work harder, and can put you at risk for different illnesses. These foods are okay on occasion, but it is good to ask yourself if you have nourished and hydrated your body well before eating too many treats.

### **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 that we only want to eat sometimes, but how do we make a balanced healthy meal? Let's learn about the different food groups and break down some food science!

#### **Grains**

What are grains? Grains are a food group that provides our bodies with ENERGY. Grains have great nutrients, like fiber, that help to give both our bodies and our brains the energy to exercise and think! Fiber is also very helpful in digestion (*digestion* – process of breaking down food and nutrients so that the body can use and absorb it). We want to choose whole grains more often than refined grains because whole grains have the WHOLE grain (meaning nothing has been removed) which gives it more nutrients. We want to try to make at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  our grains whole grains.

Ask Class: Can you give some examples of grains?

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

Ask Class: Can anyone give an example of a food that would be considered a whole grain?

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

*Refined grains* are what we call grains that have been through a breakdown process removing part of the grain.

For Example: A grain is made up of three main parts\* - the germ, endosperm, and bran. A refined grain would only have the endosperm left after going through processing. Additionally, by removing the germ and bran, it also removes some important healthy vitamins and minerals, fiber, protein, and fats.

Educators Note: Refer to the Grain Infographic

However, if the refined grain has the word 'Enriched' beside it, then it may have some of the nutrients that would be lost in processing added back in.

An example of a refined grain vs. a whole grain would be: white bread vs. whole grain bread.

### **Proteins**

What is protein? Protein is a nutrient we get from food that helps to BUILD our muscles and strengthen our bones! Muscles and bones are important for movement. Bones also help structure our bodies and protect our important organs.

*Fun Fact: Did you know that you have strong muscles in your stomach to help mix and digest your food?*

Protein-rich foods (*protein-rich foods* – food high in protein) also have high amounts of important vitamins and minerals. Some examples being iron, calcium, and vitamin B12. These vitamins and minerals help to keep us strong, healthy, and they help us to fight disease and sickness! Vitamins and minerals from protein-rich foods can also help to keep our blood healthy and replenish our body's cells!

*Ask Class: What kinds of foods do you think have lots of protein? Is it possible to get protein from plants? Can you list some high plant protein foods?*

*\*Animal source: eggs, meat, poultry, fish/shellfish, dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese, etc.)*

*\*Plant source: nuts/seeds, beans, peas, tofu, soy*

### **Fruits & Vegetables**

Fruits and vegetables are very important because inside them is fiber, VITAMINS, and MINERALS. Some examples of vitamins and minerals from fruits and vegetables are: Vitamin A, C, and E. Fruits and vegetables also contain something called *antioxidants*, which play a very important role in our bodies by helping to combat cancer and sickness. They also help us to grow and help to keep our bodies strong by replenishing and cleaning cells! It is best to get a variety of these nutrients in your diet to help keep you strong and healthy.

*Ask Class: Can you think of any vitamins and/or minerals that certain fruits or vegetables provide us with?*

*For Example: Oranges provides us with vitamin C, peppers provide us with vitamin C, spinach gives us iron, broccoli provides us with calcium, bananas and potatoes provide us with potassium, etc.*

### **Dairy:**

What is the Dairy food group? Dairy is food made from milk! Foods from the Dairy group are important because they have important vitamins and minerals to help keep our bones and teeth strong. One example being *calcium!* Calcium helps our body to perform many of its daily functions.

*Fun Fact: Most foods in the Dairy food group also have protein!*

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

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

### **Section 4: How do Oils Play a Role in my Diet**

Oils are NOT a food group, but oils do play an important role in our diets. Oils have lots of fats in them which can help give our bodies energy. Fats can also help the body with important functions such as: keeping our bodies warm and acting like a cushion to protect our organs. We want to choose vegetable oils most of the time compared to other fats, such as butter, because plant oils often have more good fats.

### **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  $\frac{1}{2}$  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](https://myplate.gov)

### **REFLECTION NOTES:**