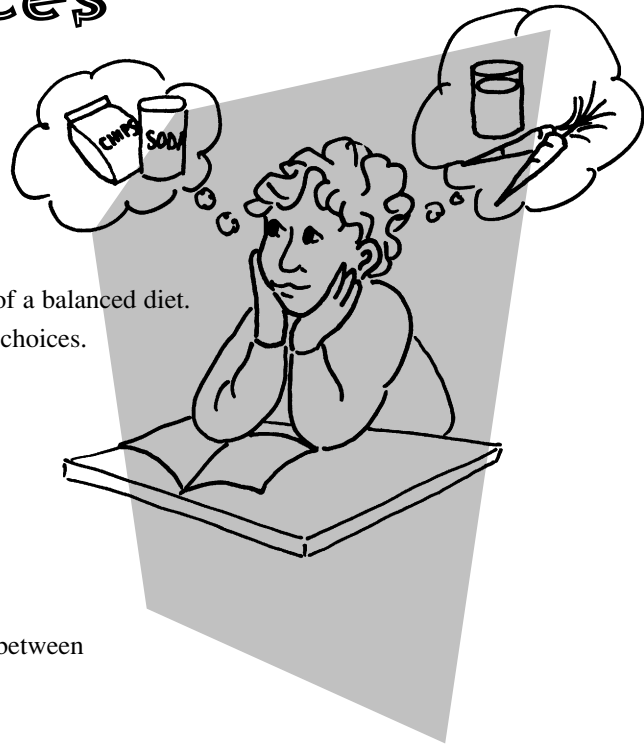


# Making Healthy Food Choices



## OBJECTIVES:

To help children understand the importance of a balanced diet.  
To encourage children to make healthy food choices.

## GROUP SIZE:

6 to 8 children per adult volunteer.

## TIME FRAME:

This lesson is designed for a group meeting between  
30 and 60 minutes.

## BACKGROUND:

Help children discover the importance of making healthy food choices.  
Use the food pyramid to illustrate the kinds of food our bodies need  
every day. Stress the importance of healthy snacks and balanced meals.

### LIFE SKILL AREAS

Group games are important to the development of social skills and decision making. Critical thinking and concept formation will be enhanced by the hands-on experiments. Development of fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination will be encouraged by the use of scissors, markers and assembly of the snack.

### HELPS TO THE VOLUNTEERS

*Try these suggestions:*

- Choose one or two of the following activities from each section.
- Try to create appropriate atmosphere by decorating the room with posters and props, using costumes related to the activity, pre-meeting preparation by the 4-H members, thinking about special seating arrangements, and playing background music.

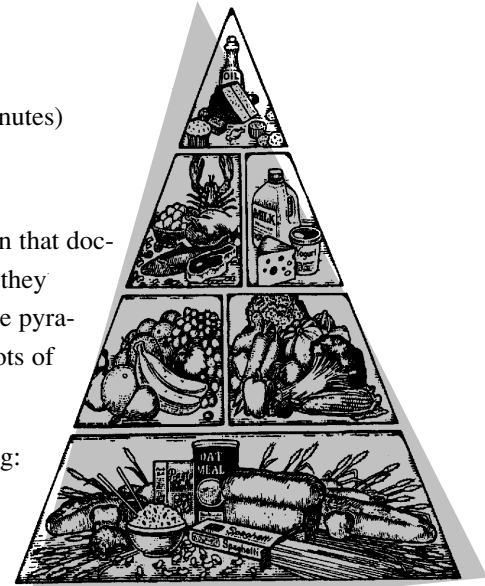
**LEARNING ACTIVITIES:**

**I. GETTING STARTED**

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Introducing the Food Guide Pyramid" (4 - 5 minutes)

**Materials:** Food Guide Pyramid Chart

Show the children a picture of the food guide pyramid. Explain that doctors and nutrition experts made this chart to show people what they need to eat everyday to stay healthy. Point out each level of the pyramid, starting at the bottom. Ask the children to help think of lots of examples from each level.



After the children have shared their examples, ask the following:

- Why do you think we need food from each group?
- Why is the first level (breads) the biggest?
- Why are fats and sweets at the tip of the pyramid the smallest group?
- Can you think of examples of food that aren't very healthy?
- What group would they fit in?
- What are some of your favorite healthy foods?

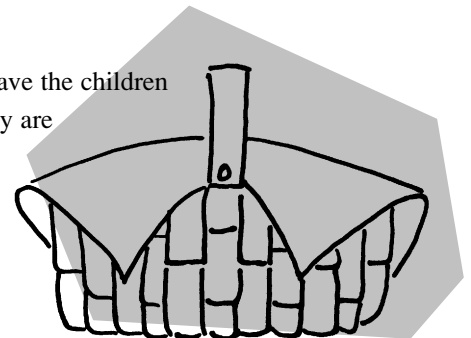
**Application:** Look at meals that are served in restaurants, at school, and at home. Do they have something from each food group?

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "A Picnic with the Food Guide Pyramid" (5 - 7 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** food guide pyramid chart, picnic basket

Play a memory game to reinforce the concept of the food pyramid. Have the children sit in a circle. Tell them to imagine they are going on a picnic and they are responsible for packing the picnic basket. Give the picnic basket to the first child who will say, "I'm going on a picnic and I'm taking (item from bread and cereal group). The basket is then passed to the next child who repeats what the first child said and adds an item from the vegetable group. As the basket is passed again, the next child repeats what the first two said and adds something from the fruit group.



Continue around the circle, adding selections from the milk group and the meat group. As more food is added to the picnic basket, the harder it will be to remember what other children have packed.

Encourage the children to put on their thinking caps and help each other if they need to! Repeat the sequence (bread, vegetable, fruit, milk, and meat) as needed. After each child has added their imaginary selection to the picnic basket, talk about the kinds of food they chose. Were the choices healthy? Would they taste good together?

**Application:** Ask your parents to help you explore your kitchen. Can you find items that fit into all of the food groups? Plan a pretend meal using the food guide pyramid. Ask your parents if you can plan a real meal with their help.

☀ **ACTIVITY:** Game "Tastes Like..." (6 - 8 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** a blindfold and small samples of healthy food to taste such as pretzels, bread, crackers, grapes, raisins, banana slices, celery, carrots, peanuts, cheese.

Place all the food samples on a tray so that everyone can see them. Blindfold one child at a time and give them a sample taste. See if the food can be identified by taste. Ask what food group it belongs to. Let each child have a turn. Reinforce the idea that a good snack doesn't have to be "junk food." Encourage them to think of other examples of healthy snacks.

**Application:** The next time you go to the grocery store, be a snack detective! Look for healthy foods that would make a good snack.

## II. DIGGING DEEPER

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "What's on Your Plate?" Food Collage (7 - 9 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** paper plates, magazines for women, grocery ads, scissors, glue

Invite the children to look through magazines and ads for pictures of healthy foods to cut out. Ask them to find examples of foods from each of the food groups that might taste good together for a meal. Have them paste the foods on paper plates. Talk about their choices. Ask them to tell the group what their favorite meals is. Emphasize the importance of balanced meals.

Note to the Volunteer: Have the children make extra collages to use in the Art Exhibit and Cloverbud Display lessons in the subject area of Community Expressive Arts.

**Application:** Think about packing school lunches.

- Are your lunches balanced?
- Is there anything you could change to improve it?
- What about lunches served at the school?



☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Be a Fat Detector" (4 - 5 minutes)

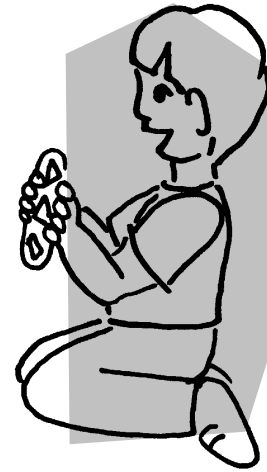
**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** brown paper bag (cut into two inch squares), pencil, salad dressing, potato chips, french fries, bread, apple, water.

Try this experiment to see what foods have fat in them. Rub a little bit of the food on the paper bag squares. Make sure you label each piece of paper with its corresponding food. While you're waiting for the food spots to dry, talk about these points:

- Fats and sweets are at the top of the pyramid and are supposed to be "used sparingly."
- What does that mean?
- Why should people watch how much fat they eat?
- Can you think of examples of foods that probably have a lot of fat in them?

When the spots have dried, hold them up to the light. Fat will be absorbed into the brown paper and look shiny. Ask if any of the foods contained fat. Which ones? Was this a surprise? Encourage children to think about the foods they eat and try to make healthy choices.



☀ **ACTIVITY:** Song "Did You Ever See a Bagel?" (5 - 7 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** none.

Gather children in a circle. Explain that you are going to sing a song that has the same tune as "Did You Ever See a Lassie?" only this song is about food. Each child will have an opportunity to choose a food and act out something about it (popcorn popping, bananas peeling, pancakes turning, etc.) while the rest of the group follows along. Here are the words:

Did You Ever See A Bagel?

(sung to the tune of "Did You Ever See a Lassie?")

Did you ever see a bagel

A bagel, a bagel.

Did you ever see a bagel

Go this way and that?

Go this way

(act out spreading a bagel with cream

And that way.

cheese or popping out of the toaster)

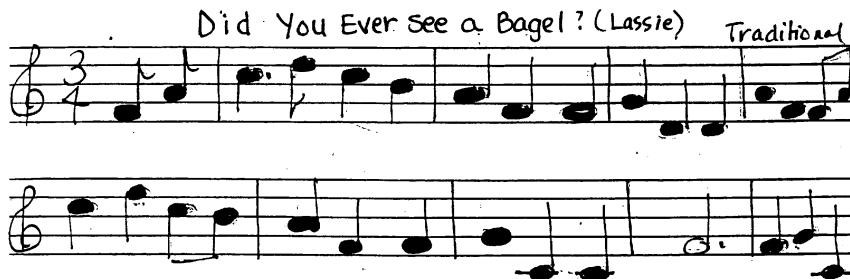
Go this way

And that way.

Did you ever see a bagel

Go this way and that?

Encourage each child to think of a food and help them create actions to go along with their ideas.

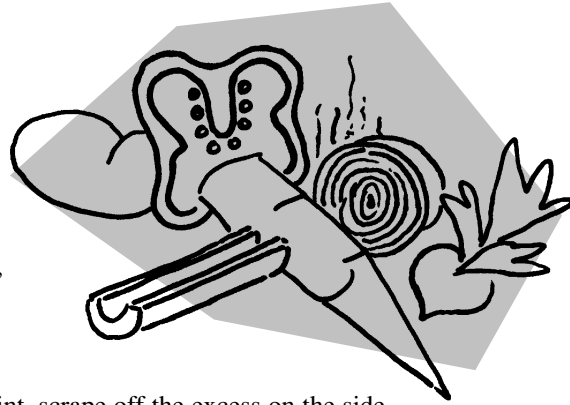


### III. LOOKING WITHIN

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Veggie Art Prints" (7 - 9 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** tempera paint, spoons, styrofoam meat trays, paintshirts, paper, newspaper, cut-up vegetables such as carrots, celery, peppers, onions.



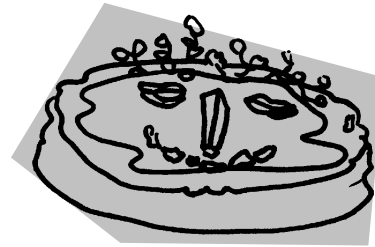
Show the children how to dip the vegetables into the paint, scrape off the excess on the side of the tray and print with them. Encourage them to experiment with repeating patterns and colors.

**Application:** Look for examples of how food is often used as a subject for works of art. Many famous paintings are of food. Look at home, friend's homes, your school, the library, and even in the grocery store!

**ACTIVITY:** "Funny Face Muffins" (7 - 9 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** plastic knives, small paper plates, sandwich bags, English muffins cut in half, peanut butter or cream cheese, carrot and celery sticks, sprouts, shredded cheese, raisins and coconut.



Arrange the ingredients and supplies on the table and let the children use their imaginations to create a funny face on a muffin. Since children may want to make one funny face to eat and one to take home, make sure to have enough ingredients available. Package the "keepers" in sandwich bags for the trip home!

**Application:** What other fun combinations can you think of that would make healthy snacks?

### IV. BRINGING CLOSURE

☀ **ACTIVITY:** Story "You Are What You Eat"

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** none.

Gather the children together and tell them the following story, encouraging them all to participate.

## "You Are What You Eat" A Group Participation Story

A long time ago in a land far away lived the healthiest kids you ever saw. They had very strong muscles (**flex your muscles**). They had excellent posture (**stand very tall**) and they had the brightest eyes and the most beautiful white teeth (**smile**).

These kids were healthy because they ate lots and lots of good, healthy, fresh foods (**ask group to give examples of healthy foods**). Because they were so healthy they could swim farther than anyone else (**pretend to swim**). They could do more jumping jacks than anyone else (**do jumping jacks**) and they could run farther than anyone else (**run in place**).

Across the street lived the laziest kids you ever saw! They were real, honest to goodness couch potatoes! Their muscles weren't strong at all (**flex weak muscles**). Their posture was terrible (**slump your shoulders**). They had eyes that just stared and mouths that wouldn't smile because their teeth were so rotten (**stare blankly, looking sad**).

These kids were lazy and out of shape because they ate lots and lots of greasy, junk food and sweets (**ask group to give examples of unhealthy snack foods**). Because these kids were so out of shape, they weren't very strong swimmers (**pretend to swim weakly**). They had trouble doing jumping jacks (**do uncoordinated, sloppy jumping jacks**) and they were slower than turtles when they ran (**run in place slowly**).

The healthy kids (**flex muscles, stand tall, and smile**) wanted to help the lazy kids (**slump over, look sad**), so they invited them to their house for lunch. They served lots of healthy foods (**ask for suggestions**). They all had a great time! The healthy kids invited them for lunch and dinner every day for the whole month. Guess what happened? (**ask for ideas**) The healthy kids and the kids from across the street looked and acted exactly the same! Now they all had great posture (**stand tall**) and now they all had bright eyes and great smiles (**smile**). Now they all could swim farther than anyone else (**pretend to swim**). Now they all could do more jumping jacks than anyone else (**do jumping jacks fast**) and now they all could run faster than anyone else (**run in place real fast**). They were all very happy to be friends and always remembered what they had learned. Can you? (**ask for ideas**)

## V. GOING BEYOND

1. Play a game of twenty questions. Randomly select a child to pick a healthy food that the rest of the group must guess by asking questions that can be answered with only a "yes" or a "no."
2. Let the children draw their favorite meal on a paper plate using crayons or markers. Encourage them to include something from each area of the food pyramid.

### *Reading Adventures*

Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs, by Judi Barrett

The Beranstain Bears and Too Much Junk Food, by Stan and Jan Beranstain

Stone Soup, by Marcia Brown

Strega Nona, by Tomie dePaolo

Gregory the Terrible Eater, by Mitchell Sharmat