

Grades 6-8: Lesson 1

Objectives

1. Identify the five food major food groups within the Food Guide Pyramid.
2. Determine what a proper serving size is.
3. Use the Food Guide Pyramid as an outline for daily healthy eating.

Materials needed

- **Food Guide Pyramid** handout
- Measuring cups
- **Which Food Group?** activity sheet
- **My Own Food Guide Pyramid** activity sheet
- **My Food Diary** handout

Things to do before

1. Make copies of **Food Guide Pyramid** handout (1 per student).
2. Make copies of **Which Food Group?** activity sheet (1 per student).
3. Make copies of **My Own Food Guide Pyramid** activity sheet (1 per student).
4. Make copies of **My Food Diary** handout (1 per student).

Language Development

calorie: a measure of how much energy food provides for your body

carbohydrate: a building block of food that provides your body with energy found in the grain, fruit, and vegetable food groups

fat: the major form of energy storage in the body

protein: a building block of food that helps build and maintain muscles in your body to keep you strong, found in the meat and dairy food groups

Activity

1. Provide each student with a **Food Guide Pyramid** handout. Explain that the Pyramid is a general outline that lets us choose a healthy diet that is right for us. The purpose of the Pyramid is to help us eat a variety of foods to get the nutrients we need and get the right amount of calories to maintain or improve our weight. The Pyramid only gives a suggested number of servings. Tell students that if they are going through a growth spurt or are very physically

active, they may need to eat more servings than what is suggested from different parts of the pyramid.

2. Tell the students that there are five major food groups. Explain the structure of the Pyramid.
 - The base of the pyramid is the bread, cereal, pasta, rice, and pasta group. These foods are major sources of carbohydrate, the nutrient that the body uses as its main energy source. The foods in this group should make up most of what we eat each day because they provide us with power. Whole-grain products are best because they have more nutrients than white-flour products that have been overprocessed. We should eat 6-11 servings from this group every day. Ask students, “What do you think a proper serving size is?” Explain that one serving from this food group is approximately equal to one slice of whole-wheat bread or half a cup of cooked rice. Use the measuring cups to provide visual assistance.
 - The second level from the bottom includes foods that come from plants: vegetables and fruits. It is recommended that we eat 3-5 servings of vegetables and 2-4 servings of fruit per day. One serving of a vegetable is equal to about one cup of raw leafy greens. One serving of a fruit is equal to about 1 medium apple. Ask students, “Why are vegetables and fruits important?” Explain that vegetables and fruits provide us with important vitamins and minerals. Vegetables also contain carbohydrates to energize our body and fiber to help us keep food moving along the digestive tract, prevent constipation, and prevent some types of cancer and heart disease. Be sure to eat lots of dark green, leafy vegetables and colorful fruits!
 - The next level includes foods that come mostly from animals. The dairy group includes milk, yogurt, and cheese. Ask students, “Why are dairy products important?” Explain that the foods in this group provide us with calcium to build strong bones and teeth. It is recommended that we eat 2-3 servings from the milk group a day. One cup of milk is about one serving. The meat group includes meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts. Explain that the foods in this group are good sources of protein, the nutrient that is essential for growing and building our body. Be sure to choose options in this group that are low in fat and calories, such as tofu. We should also eat 2-3 servings from the meat group per day. One serving is equal to about 2-3 ounces of cooked lean poultry.
 - The tip of the Pyramid shows fats, oils, and sweets, although this is not really a food group. Sugar and fat are found naturally in many of the foods from the other parts of the pyramid, such as the natural sugars in fruits or the fat in

cheese. But we should limit the amount of added sugar and fat in our diet. Items such as salad dressings and oils, cream, butter, margarine, sugars, soft drinks, candies, and sweet desserts taste flavorful, but they do not benefit our bodies. Ask students, “Why is it necessary to limit the amount of sugar and fats in our diet?” Explain that we should only use these foods sparingly because these foods provide excess calories, which can cause us to gain weight if we do not exercise enough.

3. Distribute **Which Food Group?** activity sheet. Tell students to recall what they ate during the day yesterday and to draw or write their meals on the left column. In the right column, tell students to identify which food groups each food choice included. Ask students to study what they ate yesterday and determine whether they are eating the recommended servings from the major food groups. If not, ask students to brainstorm ideas about how to improve their healthy eating habits.
4. Distribute **My Own Food Guide Pyramid** activity sheets. Allow students to write and draw pictures of their favorite nutritious food items in the appropriate sections of the pyramid. Tell them to use their personal food guide pyramid during the week to choose nutritious foods to eat. Tell students to share their personal food guide pyramids with their friends and family and discuss ways to maintain healthy eating habits.
5. Distribute **My Food Diary** handout to each student. Explain to students that their job for this week is to keep track of what they eat. Tell them to draw pictures and write about what they eat for breakfast, lunch, snack(s), and dinner. Tell students to ask their family members, friends, and classmates to help them choose healthy things to eat. At the end of the week, ask students to look at their food diaries and write an essay about whether they are eating nutritious foods and how they can eat healthier.