

Lesson: MyPlate

Supplies Needed:

- EP_Five-Minute-Fitness-Ideas
- EP_MyPlate-Visual
- Paper
- Writing utensils

Goals:

- Students will be able to identify the five components of MyPlate and understand the importance of eating a well balanced diet.
- Given a blank plate, students will be able to design a balanced meal.
- Students will be able to give examples of food items from each of the food groups.

Background:

MyPlate was created by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to help Americans understand the foundation of a healthy diet. To learn more about MyPlate, please visit: www.choosemyplate.gov. The Nurture curriculum reinforces general nutrition guidelines as set forth by the USDA 2010 dietary guidelines. It does not promote the exclusion of any food group or strict consumption of select super foods. The Nurture nutrition message is broad; its primary goals are to emphasize balance and promote a healthy relationship with food.

Children have a hard time remembering the benefits of the various food groups. To help them remember, Nurture uses specific food group actions every time a food group is mentioned. We encourage the students to use these symbols as well.

Vegetables – Smile because they make our bodies happy.

Fruits – Make okay symbol with hand because fruits keep us feeling okay.

Grains – Pump arms like you are running in place because grains give us energy.

Protein – Flex your bicep muscles because muscles are made of protein.

Dairy – Point to your teeth because dairy helps build strong teeth and bones.

Lesson:

Okay, let's start by getting our bodies energized and brains ready to learn. Everyone stand up. Make your legs shoulder width apart and then bend your knees while gently bringing your arms in front of you. Now, stand raising hands above head, inhaling as you stand. Exhale and return to bent knee position. Repeat four times. Now, with your knees bent, bring your arms out to your sides and start shuffling your feet quickly like you are playing defense on basketball. Continue for 45 seconds. Now do ten jumping jacks. Let's end with a calming yoga pose called the Warrior. Focus on one spot and breath deeply and slowly. **(After 45 seconds, challenge them to extend their back leg into a Superman pose.)** Great job! Everyone please sit down.



(Show MyPlate Visual.) MyPlate is a great tool to remind us how to eat a balanced diet. Eating a well-balanced diet helps us stay healthy, grow strong, and helps us perform at our best.

Raise your hand if you can list all five food groups?
(*Vegetables, fruit, grains, protein, dairy*)

Examples:

Protein – Chicken, hamburger, Fish, Eggs, Beans, Tofu, Almonds, Nuts, Nut Butters.

Grains – Bread, Rice, Tortillas, Pasta, Oatmeal, Popcorn, Quinoa

Dairy – Milk, Yogurt, Cheese, Ice Cream, Soy Milk

Fruits – Apples, Bananas, Mangoes, Orange Juice, Raisins, Lemons

Vegetables – Spinach, Carrots, Cucumbers, Green Beans, Sweet Potatoes, Peas, Squash

Why do we need to eat a variety of foods? What would happen if we only ate one or two of the food groups?

(We would miss out on important vitamins, mineral and nutrients.)

(With the next questions if the children don't remember, give them a clue by using the symbol. If answered correctly, congratulate them and ask if they remember the symbol.)

Who can remember why it is important to eat fruits **(Make okay sign.)** and vegetables **(Smile.)**?

(Fruits and vegetables contain vitamins, minerals, fiber, and water, which are important in keeping our bodies healthy.)

Who can remember why it is important to eat grains **(Pump arms.)**?

(Grains give our bodies energy, so we can play, run, and think clearly.)

Who can remember why it is important to eat protein **(Flex biceps.)**?

(Protein helps us build strong muscles.)

Who can remember why it is important to eat and drink dairy or dairy substitutes **(Point to teeth)**?

(Dairy provides our bodies with calcium and vitamin D, which is important for building strong bones and teeth.)

Today, I'm going to divide you up into five teams. Each team will represent a different food group. When I say, "Go," I want your team to write down as many Go Foods that belong to that food group.

After three minutes, we will share our ideas with the rest of the class. **(As the students share their ideas with the group, make sure they've categorized the food properly. See Tips section below.)**

(If students can easily sort foods by food group, see if they can also subcategorize into Go and Slow Foods. Give the examples below and have the students identify which food is a healthier choice.)

| Choice A | Choice B | Best Choice? |
|-----------|------------------------|---|
| Hamburger | Grilled Chicken Breast | (B) Grilled Chicken Breast Chicken is a leaner source of protein than most hamburgers and has less fat. |

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------------|--|
| Oatmeal | Frosted Flakes Cereal | (A) Oatmeal Oatmeal is a whole grain, and contains more fiber and less sugar than Frosted Flakes cereal. |
| Ice Cream | 1% Milk | (B) 1% Milk 1% milk has less fat and sugar than ice cream. |
| Orange | Orange Juice | (A) Orange Whole fruit contains more fiber than fruit juice. Fiber helps with digestion and helps you feel full. |
| French Fries | Baked Potatoes | (B) Baked Potatoes Fried foods have extra fat. When dressing a baked potato we can control our toppings to keep the fat content lower. |

(If there is still time left, have each team create Sensational Snacks using items from their brainstormed list. Sensational Snacks have:

- **Go Foods** from at least two food groups
- Are about the size of two handfuls – palms turned up

Sensational Snack Examples:

Low fat yogurt with fresh berries

Celery with peanut butter

Whole grain crackers and hummus

Share ideas with class if time permits.)

Tips:

Protein Group contains meats, poultry, beans, seeds, and nuts.

Grains Group contains bread, pasta, crackers, whole grains like oatmeal and brown rice.

Dairy Group - MyPlate distinguishes between dairy and protein so yogurt and cheese fall into this group. For students who can't have dairy, they can still get calcium from things like soy milk or almond milk. This is important for students who can't have dairy.

Fruits and Vegetables - Students love to talk about how to tell the difference between fruits and vegetables. Most fruits have seeds on the inside. There are exceptions such as strawberries and some exotic berries.

Scientists classify fruits and vegetables based on whether or not they have seeds. In the health world, however, we classify fruits and vegetables based on their nutrition profile. There are numerous nutrients in fruits and vegetables, but one of the deciding factors of whether a food is classified as a fruit or vegetable is the sugar content. Most fruits taste sweet such as watermelon, grapes, apples etc.

However, there are foods that are technically fruits because they have seeds, but taste more like vegetables such as zucchini, cucumber, tomatoes etc. Nutritionists classify these fruits as vegetables. It can all get very confusing! In general, a good rule of thumb is that if it tastes sweet, it is probably a fruit.

Regardless of whether it is a fruit or vegetable, it is important to include plants in the diet. They are filled with nutrients that help keep you healthy and strong.

Go Foods provide long lasting energy, tend to be minimally processed, and include things like whole grains, lean proteins, fruits and vegetables, and lean dairy.

Slow Foods may provide a quick burst of energy, but then slow you down. They are usually high in unhealthy fats, salt, or sugar and tend to be heavily processed such as chips, fried chicken, ice cream, cookies and soda.