



Exploring the Food Groups

Fifth-grade nutrition education newsletter

Lesson **1**

It's all about nutrients

There are about 40 different nutrients we need each day to stay healthy and prevent disease. No food contains all the nutrients we need, so it's important to eat a variety of foods. To make it easier to plan meals that give us the nutrients we need, use MyPlate (at right). MyPlate puts foods into groups according to the major nutrients they provide.

Here's a quick tour of each food group and why it helps you stay healthy:

Fruits

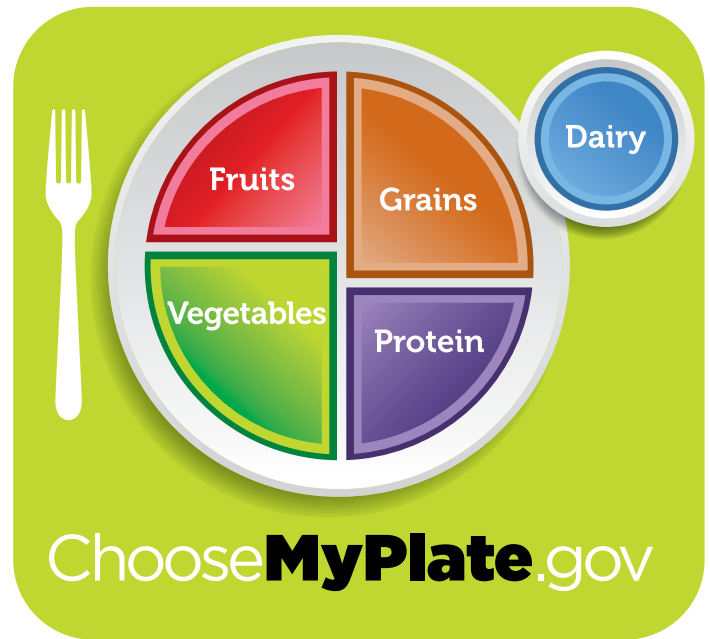
Fruits are naturally sweet, vitamin C "superstars." They also contain folate and fiber, which fills you up. Potassium found in fruits helps maintain healthy blood pressure. Most fruits are naturally low in fat, sodium and calories.

Vegetables

Looking for vitamins A, E, C and folate? Vegetables are your source! Vegetables, like fruits, also provide fiber and potassium for healthy blood pressure. Most vegetables are low in calories. Look for dark green, orange and red vegetables.

Grains

Whole grains have fiber. Enrichment provides B vitamins like thiamin, riboflavin, niacin and folate. Grains are also good sources of iron and magnesium. Eating whole grains helps you reduce your chances of getting some chronic diseases.



U.S. Department of Agriculture. ChooseMyPlate.gov

Protein Foods

The protein in food such as lean meats like poultry and fish, eggs, beans, peas, seeds and soy foods like tofu are good for our bones, muscles, skin and blood. Protein foods provide iron, zinc and magnesium.

Dairy

Minerals like calcium and potassium are found in dairy foods. You can also find vitamin D and protein in dairy foods. Choose low-fat or fat-free options. If drinking milk is a problem, try lactose-free milk or calcium-fortified soy milk.

How can you make choosing healthy foods the easy choice?

Have fruit ready for easy snacking.



- Keep whole, fresh fruit out on the counter in a bowl for easy snacking.
- Keep a snack box with cut-up fruit in the refrigerator for snacking.
- Cut up carrots and broccoli in small amounts in the kitchen for on the go snacking.
- Keep frozen veggies on hand for quick microwaving.
- Cook extra barley or bulgur and freeze. Add it to soups, stews and stir-fry dishes.
- Keep whole grains on hand for snacking with dips: whole-wheat crackers, tortillas, pita bread and bagels.
- Keep spices and herbs on hand to flavor popcorn without butter. Try garlic powder, curry, cinnamon and other favorites.
- Keep plain, fat-free or low-fat yogurt on hand as a topping for baked potatoes (instead of sour cream).
- Keep reduced fat or low-fat cheese on hand to add to salads or as a snack with whole-wheat crackers.
- Need a quick and easy protein treat for snacking on the go? Keep small salmon packages on hand.



Keep frozen veggies on hand.



Cut up carrots and broccoli for on the go snacking.



Keep spices on hand.



- Keep hummus on hand as a dip for cut-up veggies or as a spread for whole-wheat bread or crackers.

Keep hummus on hand as a dip or spread.



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