

Balanced Plates

Goals:

- Student will be able to categorize food based on the 5 food groups
- Student will be able to identify the essential macronutrients of each of the food groups
- Student will be able to design a healthy, well-balanced plate

Audience: 3rd -8th grade

Optional Craft, Activity or Snack:

- Perfect Plates

Materials:

- MyPyramid poster
- Perfect plate (poster)

Lesson:

Leader: (Hold up MyPyramid Poster), raise your hand at tell me, why do we have the MyPyramid? What is its purpose?

Leader: The pyramid acts as a guide to help you know what a balanced diet consists of. Eating a balanced diet helps us perform at our best! Let's take a closer look at the pyramid to find out how our diets stack up!

Leader: There are 5 major food groups highlighted on the food pyramid. Each of the colors represent a different food group:

Orange: Grains

Greens: Vegetables

Red: Fruits

Blue: Dairy or calcium rich foods

Purple: protein, nuts and meat

If you notice, there is also a yellow-strip on the pyramid, but it is not a food group; this is the healthy oils category. The reason this strip is so small (and is not a food group) is because it should only and make up a small amount of your diet.

Leader: Starting with the grains or orange group; raise your hand and tell me why we need grains?

Leader: grains are carbohydrates that give your body energy. With out carbs, you could not function or think clearly. Can you think of some healthy grains that give your body long lasting energy?

Leader: Grains can be either processed such as white pastas and breads, or they can be whole grains (which means they contain the entire grain kernel). Which of these grains is a better choice?

Leader: Whole grains are the healthier choice because they contain more fiber and tend to be more filling than processed grains. At least half of the grains you eat should be whole grains.

Leader: Next, let's look at the vegetable group. Many kids (and adults) are not consuming enough veggies! Why is this food group so important?

Leader: Vegetables are an excellent source of fiber. Fiber helps you feel full and promotes a healthy digestive tract. It also has been proven to help regulate diabetes, prevent some cancers, and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Vegetables are also a great source of vitamins. Vitamin A is found in a lot of vegetables; it is responsible for promoting healthy skin and vision. Some vegetables are a good source of calcium; did you know that a cup of broccoli contains as much calcium as string cheese? You should eat three servings of veggies every day. Can you think of ways that we can eat more vegetables?

Leader: Next is the fruit group. Why is it important to eat fruit?

Leader: Fruits contains essential vitamins and nutrients. Many fruits, such as strawberries, are a great source of Vitamin C. Vitamin C helps boosts your immune system to help fight disease. Also, fruits such as bananas contain an essential nutrient, potassium, which is needed to keep your body stay balanced and hydrated. Finally, fruit such as berries, contain cancer-fighting antioxidants. You should eat two servings of fruit every day.

Leader: Next, lets look at the dairy or 'calcium' rich group. Dairy products contain calcium and vitamin D, which helps build strong bones and teeth. Many dairy products are also a good source of protein.

Leader: Finally, the protein group. The protein group includes a variety of foods: meats, beans, legumes, seeds, and nuts. Even if you choose not to eat meat, there are a variety of ways to get protein into your diet. Protein is necessary to build muscles and strong bones.

Leader: When we eat our lunch or dinner, how many of us actually think about the pyramid? Do you look at your plate and ask yourself, does this look balanced? Show the balanced Plate poster.

When we eat, we should try to balance our plate with all the food groups. Look at this balanced plate, notice how the majority of the plate is vegetables and grains?

Leader: Draw a circle on the board (plate).

Ask your students to help you brainstorm a healthy dinner menu that includes all 5 food groups.

Conclusion: Mypyramid provides guidance on how to eat a more balanced diet.

Next time you are in the lunch line, or filling up your plate at dinner, take a good look, are you getting all 5 food groups? Does your plate look balanced?

Leader Resources:

MyPyramid

<http://www.mypyramid.gov/>



Balanced Plate:

<http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/healthydiet/eatwellplate/>

