

Pack a Better Lunch

Goals:

- *Students will know the components of a healthy lunch*

Audience:

- *3-5th grade*

Optional Craft, Activity or Snack:

- *Brown Bag Checklist*

Materials:

- *MyPyramid Poster*
- *Grade This Lunch (pictures of a variety of lunches; available at www.nurtureyourfamily.org (note that the lunches are ordered from best to worst).*

Lesson:

Leader: What are you having for lunch today (or what did you have for lunch today)? (allow 2-3 students to share).

Leader: Whether you pack your lunch or eat hot lunch, there are so many foods to choose from! Some food choices can be really great for our bodies; giving us lots of energy; other choices are not so healthy, and can leave us feeling tired. Today we are going to talk about the components of a healthy lunch.

Leader: A healthy lunch should contain all of the 5 food groups (show poster): whole grains, fruits, vegetables, milk (or calcium rich product), and protein. Let's take a closer look at the pyramid to see how we can construct a balanced lunch.

Starting with grains, we have a lot of choices! Breads, pastas, brown rice, crackers, pita, or tortillas! The key here is to pick a whole grain product because whole grains are full of nutrients, fiber, and will help us stay full.

Leader: What whole grain should we pick? (let students decide) Write the food on the board.

Leader: Now that we have our whole grain, let's move on to the vegetable group. There are many veggies to choose from! Carrots, lettuce, celery, spinach, cucumbers etc. Veggies are an excellent source of vitamins, nutrients, and fiber.

Although potatoes are a vegetable, are French fries a good choice? No, French fries are high in fat and calories, and will leave you feeling sluggish.

Which vegetable would you like in our lunch? (write it on the board.)

Leader: Moving on to fruits, fruits are also a great source of vitamins and antioxidants. Can you think of a tasty fruit to include in our lunch? (write one on the board).

What about fruit roll-ups or fruit slushies? These foods usually contain a lot of added sugar, which can cause you to feel sluggish.

Leader: Milk is the next food group. Cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese, and milk are all great options. Milk is super easy to include in our lunch because they sell it at school! Milk is rich in calcium and vitamin D; these nutrients help build strong bones and teeth. Which milk product should we include in our lunch? (write it on the board)

Leader: Finally, let's move on to the meat or protein group. What are our choices here?

Chicken, turkey, hamburger, ham, fish, nuts, seeds, peanut butter, beans, soy etc. Protein is the building block for our body; you need protein to build strong muscles and maintain a healthy body. Which protein should we include in our lunch? (write it on the board).

Leader: It looks like we have a pretty tasty lunch! (Read the menu out loud)

Leader: Are we missing anything? What about a treat?! Is it okay to include a treat in our lunch? Sure! Balance is the key to a healthy diet. When packing a treat, think small portions, such as a small cookie, a 2-bite brownie, or a piece of chocolate. If you prefer salty snacks, you can pack a handful of chips or pretzels.

Leader: Lunch is a great time to fuel up on healthy foods that give you long-lasting energy. If you find that you are sluggish around 1:00 or 2:00 in the afternoon, take a look at what you ate for lunch. Try packing a few of the foods we talked about today and see how you feel.

Leader: We'll end our lesson today with a game. I'm going to show you a picture of a lunch and you get to grade the lunch.

We'll use the following grading system:

If the lunch contains all 5 food groups, it gets an A

If the lunch contains 4 food groups, it gets a B

If the lunch contains 3 food groups but contains a lot of added sugar and/or salt, it gets a C

If the lunch contains 1-2 food groups but contains a lot of added sugar and/or salt, it gets a D

If the lunch contains no food groups and contains all sugary and salty snack foods, it gets an F.

(Show one picture at a time. Read the menu and ask the children to raise their hand to give a letter grade for that lunch. Why did they issue this grade? Are there any major food groups missing? How would that lunch make them feel?)

Answers:

Slide #1: Gets an A; has all 5 food groups

Slide #2: Gets a B; is missing milk/calcium rich food. Maybe swap juice for milk?

Slide #3 Gets a D, missing whole grains, fruits, veggies, and contains a lot of sodium and sugar

Slide #4 Gets a D, missing whole grains, fruits, veggies, and contains a lot of sodium and sugar

Slide #5: Gets an F, missing all 5 food groups, and is high in sugar and sodium

Note: younger grades may simply order the lunches from best to worse.

Resources:

http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_fit/nutrition/lunch.html

http://kidshealth.org/kid/nutrition/food/school_lunches.html