

Elementary Program Guidelines for Teaching Nutrition

The Nurture Elementary Program reinforces general nutrition guidelines as set forth by the USDA dietary guidelines. It does not promote the exclusion of any food group or strict consumption of select “superfoods”. The Nurture nutrition message is broad; its primary goals are to emphasize balance and a healthy relationship with food.

It is important not to focus too much on weight during the lessons. We want the students to develop positive relationships with food, avoiding both obesity and eating disorders. The focus should be on eating for good energy. [Lessons 1.2 \(Energy Balance\)](#) and [3.2 \(focus on hunger and appetite\)](#) do the best job of conveying this and would be good to review.

We purposely do not discuss calories, again to avoid eating disorder issues. Energy in from food comes from calories, but we want to students to focus on being physically active, eating go foods – especially fruits and vegetables, and eating mindfully to satisfaction.

To create the greatest impact with students:

- Keep messages positive
- Promote a collaborative environment
- Maintain an upbeat and fun atmosphere
- Encourage participants to share ideas
- Welcome and value all participants
- Use your own choices and life circumstances as examples, such as,
“To increase my physical activity, I walk with my children to and from school.”

Do NOT

- Advocate for any specific weight loss or nutrition program
- Portray yourself as an exclusive expert on any topic
- Do all the talking
- Judge participant food or fitness choices
- Tell people what they ‘should’ do. For example,
“To get more exercise, you should walk to school.”
- Provide medical advice of any kind
- Provide individualized or group nutrition or psychological counseling

Limitations of Training and What Laypeople are Allowed to Teach

Illinois State Law prohibits individuals from providing medical nutrition advice unless he/she is a licensed dietitian

<http://ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=1297&ChapAct=225%26nbsp;ILCS%26nbsp;30/&ChapterID=24&ChapterName=PROFESSIONS+AND+OCCUPATIONS&ActName=Dietetic+and+Nutrition+Services+Practice+Act.>

Laypeople are able to share general nutrition information, but **are prohibited from:**

- providing medical advice
- offering nutrition counseling
- diagnosing a nutrition-related condition

In the state of Illinois, eliciting medical nutrition information is restricted to licensed registered dietitians.

What can laypeople teach in Illinois?

Laypeople can teach participants the **application** of general nutrition concepts, share recipes, demonstrate cooking techniques, provide shopping tips, and discuss the 2010 Dietary Guidelines.

What are the 2010 Dietary guidelines?

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines are general nutrition recommendations for optimal health. Topics covered in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines include: fruits, vegetables, dairy, whole grains, protein, salt, sugar, energy balance, portion control, and exercise.

[Introduction to the Guidelines](#)

[Foods and Nutrients to Increase](#)

[2010 Dietary Guidelines Consumer Brochure](#)

What topics are covered in a Nurture class?

Below is a list of topics covered in Nurture classes. The tip sheets provide excellent talking points when teaching a class. When following the links to MyPlate, there is a wealth of additional information. Take some time and explore!

Topic	What to discuss?	What to avoid?
MyPlate Tips: MyPlate Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of 5 food groups • Discussion of what foods belong in each group • Benefit of eating a variety of foods • Preparing well balanced meals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescribing total caloric intake. Energy requirements vary depending on: age, activity level, and health status. • Restricting or avoiding a food group.
Vegetables Fruits Tips: Fruit & Vegetables Kids and Fruits and Veggies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The benefits of consuming a variety of (whole) fruits and vegetables • General recommendation of filling half your plates with fruits and vegetables • Tips on how to eat more fruits and vegetables • Tips on how to pick and store fruits and vegetables • List of seasonal fruits and vegetables • Tips on how to increase children’s consumption of fruits and vegetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusive consumption of organic produce. Don’t promote exclusive consumption of organics as this is cost-prohibitive for many people.
Beverages Drinking Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits of drinking water • Signs of dehydration • Sugar content of beverages • Tips on how to consume more water • Tips for how to limit intake of sugary beverages and juice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific water intake (ie. 8 cups of water per day). If people are on medications, pregnant, lactating or have heart complications, there are significant variances in water recommendations.

Topic	What to discuss?	What to avoid?
Grains Whole Grains Fiber Carbohydrates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The benefits of consuming whole grains • How to read ingredient labels • Tips on how to consume more whole grains • Introduction to ‘unique’ whole grains (bulgur, millet, quinoa). • Recipes that include whole grains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific carbohydrate (grams) recommendations. There are varying levels of carbohydrate needs based on age, activity level and health status. • Suggesting participants go gluten free. Participants struggling with food intolerances should visit their primary care provider.
Protein Tips: Vegetarians Protein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits of eating a variety of proteins • Examples of protein-rich foods • Tips for purchasing economical sources of protein (beans, lentil, split peas, eggs, lean cuts of meat) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting a strict vegetarian diet • Encouraging vegetarians to eat fish and/or meat • Assigning specific protein intake (grams). Individual protein needs vary based on age, gender, activity level and health status.
Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits of getting sufficient calcium and vitamin D for healthy bones and teeth • Examples of dairy and calcium rich foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommending the use of ANY supplement, vitamin, or mineral. • Encouraging people with dairy sensitivities or cultural restrictions to eat dairy • Discussing reasons why cow’s milk may be bad for our health

Topic	What to discuss?	What to avoid?
Vitamins Minerals Salt Reducing Sodium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting the consumption of ‘whole’ foods to get vitamins and minerals • For the prenatal class, stress the importance of working with primary care provider to ensure nutrients are being met (you can say that a daily multivitamin is generally recommended for this population) • ALWAYS encourage participants to speak with their primary care provider in regards to specific metabolic concerns, vitamins, minerals, and supplements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommending the use of ANY supplement, vitamin, or mineral.
Oils Fats Cholesterol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting the consumption of healthy fats in moderation • Discussing that fats enable our bodies to absorb some vitamins • Limit the consumption of saturated fats • Avoid the consumption of trans fats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommending eliminating fat and oils from diets • Saying fats are unhealthy or bad
Physical Activity Tips for Increasing Physical Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tips on how to incorporate more exercise or daily physical activity • Benefits of exercise • Always encourage participants to speak with a primary care provider if they are new to exercise, have undergone surgery or are on medications before they begin an exercise routine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescribing specific exercise routines • Leading participants through a vigorous exercise routine during class. Exercises should be performed at a moderate intensity level and participants should always be encouraged to take breaks when needed.

Topic	What to discuss?	What to avoid?
What kids really eat Breakfast Snacks Kids and Sweets Eating on a Budget Healthy Role Model Food Labels Portion Distortion Calories Listening to your body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The benefits of home cooked meals • Cost savings of making meals at home • Strategies and tips for smart grocery shopping • Ideas for leftovers • How to be a good role model • Calories are units of energy and essential for life • It is important to balance your energy consumption with energy expenditures • How to listen to your body to determine if you are hungry, thirsty, sleepy, or anxious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricting all processed or fast foods (this is not realistic for many people) • Recommending amounts of calories to consume • Speaking of calories in a negative fashion • Be aware that eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia are also problems • Do not to give advice for eating disorders (overeating, underrating) or weight loss

Tips for Teaching

Nurture classes promote a welcoming environment. One of our greatest strengths is the ability to make classes personal, fun, and engaging. The Coach sets the tone for the class. Here are a few tips to keep the class upbeat, fun, and within the Nurture scope.

When discussing food, always share personal stories.

To build on the fruit and veggie lesson (or MyPlate lesson) for example, give real life examples of how to increase fruit and vegetable consumption.

“In our home, I find that my children struggle with vegetable consumption. However, they love soup, so I try to add extra veggies to our homemade soups. Does anyone else have tips on how to increase the consumption of vegetables?”

Avoid telling people what they should do, instead talk about what they could do in a relatable way.

If a participant asks how to get their family to consume fewer sugary beverages, **instead of** responding with the following suggestions: “You shouldn’t have sugary beverages around the house. You should only buy water”.

Try a more relatable approach:

“My kids love juice. One way that I reduce the amount of sugar they drink is that I water the juice down before I put it in the refrigerator.”

“My kids love flavored water, but we’ve agreed as a family to limit flavored water to the weekends.”

Refer participants to www.choosemyplate.gov when they ask specific questions about calorie intake.

If a participant asks how many calories he/she should be eating, let him/her know that energy needs vary by age, gender, activity level, and health status. Never give participants an exact number; refer them to the USDA website where they can complete an energy intake questionnaire: www.choosemyplate.gov

How do you answer specific questions about weight loss?

Specific weight loss recommendations are beyond the scope of a nutrition educator. Always recommend that participants consult with their health care provider about their weight loss goals. The overall Nurture mission is to promote good health (the emphasis is not on weight loss).

(Eight) Tips for Working with Children

A general/overall rule we follow at Nurture: Get everyone actively engaged! Sitting and listening to talking heads is boring! Also:

1. Get to know your students/audience

a. **Learn everyone’s name and something special about them.** Kids are much more cooperative when they feel like you’ve taken a personal interest in them.

b. **Remember Your Audience**

We do our best work when we know who we're doing it for. So who are our program participants?

- For the Northfield Township Food Pantry, program participants qualify for food stamps and free school lunches for their children.
- They are likely to be a single parent out of work or perhaps working two jobs. They often have health issues such as hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.
- Usually they have a lot of responsibility and very little support which is why our job is so important.
- Our participants’ degree of cooking skills will vary greatly, so listening to them and asking questions about how they cook, who they cook

for and what they like to eat will provide further insight into who they are and what their food challenges might be.

2. Set expectations

- a. **During the first class, set high expectations.** Children are use to being in a structured classroom, and while Nurture is not quite like school, some of the same rules apply. **Start off by emphasizing one rule: Respect.**
 - i. Respect each other
 1. Do not talk over one another
 2. No put downs
 3. Keep your hands to yourself
 - ii. Respect the equipment/space
 1. Use caution with all kitchen equipment
 2. Clean up after yourself
 - iii. Respect yourself
- b. **Establish a procedure for how you will handle difficult behavior- and stick to it!** Consistency is key.
 - i. If a child is engaging in disrespectful behavior, address the child privately. Do not embarrass him/her by publicly reprimanding.
 - ii. Publicly praise the child that is following directions; it will help get everyone on track.

3. Give clear and precise directions

- a. Keep directions short and concise
 - b. Break directions down and have a pause every two to three steps.
For example: -"Please wash your hands, put on your aprons, and take a seat so I know you're ready. Once everyone is seated, I will explain what we're going to do next."
4. **While your directions should be stated in simple vocabulary, you do not need to talk in a "baby" voice, or in a condescending manner.** Children are able to see thru this tactic and do not appreciate being spoken down to.
 5. **Allow children to be creative.** They will probably do things differently when in the kitchen. As long as they are being safe, allow them freedom to modify with judiciousness. **Having said that, they should still follow the recipe.** You don't want them preparing foods that are inedible.
 6. **Avoid the negative.** Think of the lifeguard at the pool who screams "don't run!" Rather than telling kids what not to do, ask them what you would like them to do, "can you walk, please?"

- a. If a child is not being compliant with your request, simply state an explanation. I'm asking you to walk so you don't fall and hurt yourself. If you get hurt, you won't be able to enjoy this gorgeous day at the pool.
 - b. A simple framework:
 - i. Ask to engage in a positive behavior
 - ii. If not complying, explain why his/her chosen behavior needs modification
 - iii. Follow up with a potential consequence if the behavior continues
7. **Master the compliment.** Many adults praise by saying "good job" or "that's great". Try to be more specific when complimenting and always follow up with a question. Children love to show and tell. When you combine a compliment with an action you are reinforcing their special skill set and effectively improving their self esteem. Examples:
 - a. "I really enjoyed the dip you made. How did you make it?"
 - b. "I love how you set the table. Can you show me how you folded the napkins?"
8. **Listen!** There are going to be activities that don't go over so well. It's okay! Listen to what the kids have to say. Their feedback is what makes our program stronger!