



Main Objective

“Steps to a Healthier You” is the central message of the current USDA food guidance system, found at www.MyPyramid.gov. (Spanish materials are also available at this site.) It is intended to help Americans choose the appropriate foods and amounts to stay healthy. With the holidays rapidly approaching, it is important for everyone to start thinking about moderation and variety when it comes to their food group consumption. But don't forget to balance your food intake with physical activity!

Daily consume a variety of foods from all of the food groups – make half of your of grains whole, vary your veggies, focus on fruits, get your calcium-rich foods and go lean with protein!

Background

MyPyramid.gov acknowledges that one size does not fit all when it comes to your health. The new MyPyramid.gov website allows visitors to enter their age, gender and activity level to obtain personalized recommendations. It also provides information to help you balance food intake with physical activity. Another valuable component is the tracking feature that allows visitors to keep track of their food intake and physical activity goals.

MyPyramid.gov has several key messages: Make half of your grains whole (to increase fiber intake), vary your veggies, focus on fruits, get your calcium-rich foods (choose low or non-fat products to promote bone health), and go lean with protein (choose lean products to keep fat intake down). Different foods within each food group contain a variety of nutrients that are important for proper nutrition. The underlying goal is to promote variety, moderation and activity. In general, a balanced diet containing foods from all of the food groups offers the best nutritional value for a heart-healthy diet. (See KP KIDS handout, “Healthy Snack Ideas”.)

Sugary sodas, candies, sweets and other unhealthy snacks offer little more for the body than extra (or discretionary) calories meaning that few other nutrients are provided. The consumption of these products should be kept to a minimum and should be replaced with non-fat milk, water, 100% fruit or vegetable juice or other healthy snacks.


Younger students can learn to classify foods into the different food groups and begin to appreciate where food comes from. Older students can start to learn from where in California, the U.S. or the world different foods come. Regardless of their age, barriers will arise as students work toward increasing the variety of food groups they consume. Addressing those challenges is beneficial for students of all ages.

Take Home Activities

- 1) If possible, family members can find their own MyPyramid recommendations by entering the appropriate information at <http://www.mypyramid.gov> or <http://www.mypyramid.gov/sp-index.html> (site in Spanish).
- 2) Do a food group inventory at home. Does the food in the home match the recommended proportions and types of foods? If not, make a list of foods that would help the foods in your home look more like the pyramid recommendations.
- 3) Write a grocery list with at least one item from each food group. Be sure to focus on whole grains, a variety of fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy and calcium-rich foods, and lean protein sources.
- 4) Plan a meal with at least one item from each food group.
- 5) Try a new food from one, or all, of the food groups!

 **School Activities**

- 1) Take a closer look at the foods being offered on campus (e.g. in vending machines or at the snack bar) to see if they are consistent with the MyPyramid.gov guidelines.
- 2) Highlight food groups being served in the cafeteria this month.

 **Classroom Reward Ideas**

This would be a great time for a “Food Group” Pizza Party! Make sure all the food groups are represented on the pizza and in the proper proportions. See about getting donations from a local pizza parlor or from a local store so you can make your own pizzas.

 **Resources**

MyPyramid.gov

<http://www.mypyramid.gov>

<http://www.mypyramid.gov/sp-index.html> (site in Spanish)

This is the main website of the MyPyramid food guidance system. Students and teachers can browse this site to see their personalized MyPyramid plan, track their current food intake and find tips for meeting their MyPyramid goals. Also provided at this site is an Educational Framework for professionals. This provides more details about the MyPyramid recommendations from an educational standpoint. There is also an interactive Blast Off game for kids to play and tips for families (see For Kids link).

USDA Team Nutrition

<http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/resources/mypyramidclassroom.html>

This site provides classroom activities and lesson plans for grades K-6. Everything can be downloaded free of charge.

National Dairy Council

<http://www.nutritionexplorations.org>

The National Dairy Council has a lot of wonderful materials for kids, parents, teachers and food service workers. Kids can play interactive games while learning about the food pyramid. Teachers can find information and activities to help teach nutrition to their students. There are also several contests in which classrooms can participate.



Activities Linked to Kindergarten Content Standards & Framework

Reading 1.17, Number Sense 1.1, Algebra & Functions 1.1, Investigation and Experimentation 4.d

Reading 1.18, Listening & Speaking 2.1, Life Science 2.a

Number Sense 2.1

Measurement & Geometry 2.1

Statistics, Data Analysis, & Probability 1.1

Health Framework Expectation 1

 **Selected Reading List**

- Students can learn to identify and sort foods into the different food groups and count the number in each group.
- Have the students describe common foods from each of the food groups in general and specific language. This can also be done through an oral presentation.
- You can use healthy foods from the different food groups to explain addition and subtraction.
- Students can compare foods from the different food groups to common geometric shapes (e.g. a carton of milk is like a rectangle, a slice of bread is like a square).
- As a class, you can keep track of the number of times students eat foods from the different food groups and record the result using pictures or graphs.
- If resources are available, have the students go to <http://www.MyPyramid.gov> and print out their own personalized food pyramid recommendations.

Bread and Jam for Frances, by Russell Hoban – Language Arts