

# introduction to healthy eating

Healthy eating means enjoying a variety of foods every day. Food provides the energy and essential nutrients needed for an active life. Different children need different amounts of food, depending on their age, body size and activity level.

A healthy diet consists of food from the four food groups for preschoolers:\*

- Grains: 5 to 12 servings per day
- Vegetables and Fruit: 5 to 10 servings per day
- Milk Products: 2 to 4 servings per day
- Meat and Alternatives: 2 to 3 servings per day

\*For age-appropriate serving sizes refer to *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating and Food Serving Sizes for 1 to 3 Years and 4 to 5 Years* (included in the Snackivity Box)

## eating skills and changing behaviours

Every meal is a new experience for a child. How food looks, feels, smells and tastes is part of that experience.

For preschoolers, healthy eating is...\*\*

- Being curious about new foods and ways of eating them
- Examining the chicken sandwich before eating it
- Accepting toast only if it is cut in triangles
- Trying only a bite of squash today – maybe more tomorrow
- Drinking milk only if they can pour it into their own glass
- Loving carrots on Tuesday, refusing them on Wednesday
- Insisting the apple be whole – not in slices

- Wanting a peanut butter sandwich for lunch every day of the week
- Gobbling up the cookies they helped prepare when they are fresh from the oven
- Preferring simple foods that they recognize
- Drinking soup out of a coffee mug just like Mom's

\*\*Adapted from Health Canada



# introduction to canada's food guide to healthy eating (four activities)

## goal

To increase knowledge about *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*.

To learn the four food groups and what foods belong in each group.

## supplies – provided

- The Four Food Groups cards
- *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*
- *Food Serving Sizes for Children 1 to 3 Years and 4 to 5 Years*

## try these activities

- Grain Products – important for energy

Have a Taste Fair where children try different grain products. Examples include bread, pitas, tortillas, rye bread, pumpernickel bread, pretzels and crackers.

- Vegetables and Fruit – important for vitamins and minerals

Have a Show & Tell Your Favourite/Most Unusual Vegetable or Fruit Day. Encourage every child to bring something from home, or to draw their favourite fruit or vegetable.

- Milk Products – important for bones and teeth

Have a Milk and Cookies Day. This will be an exciting activity for the children, and will also create a great learning environment. Invite parents to participate in the session, and consider distributing *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* to every child to take home.

- Meat and Alternatives – important for muscles and growing up strong

Egg on a Spoon Relay. Find an object that is round, for example, a small ball, and have the children place the ball on a spoon, and balance it while they walk back and forth across the play area. Make a relay.

Here are some discussion questions for each food group.

- Introduce each food group with its food cards
  - Where does it fit in the Food Groups rainbow?
- How many servings of this food group do you need each day?
- Let's make a list of foods in this group
- What are your favourite foods in this group? Why?
- Pick examples from your list of foods in the group and ask:
  - What colour is this food?
  - What does it feel like?
  - What does it smell like?
  - What does it taste like?

Instead of pop or juice, give chocolate milk a try. It's a smart choice for the ultimate sweet tooth.



# create a collage

## goal

To increase the children's knowledge of *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*. To teach children the number of daily servings in each food group.

## supplies – provided

- The Four Food Groups cards
- *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*
- *Food Servings Sizes for Children 1 to 3 Years and 4 to 5 Years*

## supplies – needed

- Piece of paper for every child
- Tape or glue
- Pictures of food cut out from flyers or magazines
- Crayons, markers or coloured pencils

## how to play

- Show the children the *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* rainbow. The bigger the piece of the rainbow, the more of those foods you should eat every day.
- Have every child colour a big rainbow, the same as the one in the Food Guide.
- Show some of the food cards, and talk about where they go on the rainbow.
- Give every child a picture of a food item from the flyers or magazines. Help them to decide where their picture fits in the rainbow.
- Let the children paste or glue the flyer and magazine photos into their rainbow, and make a collage.

## alternatives

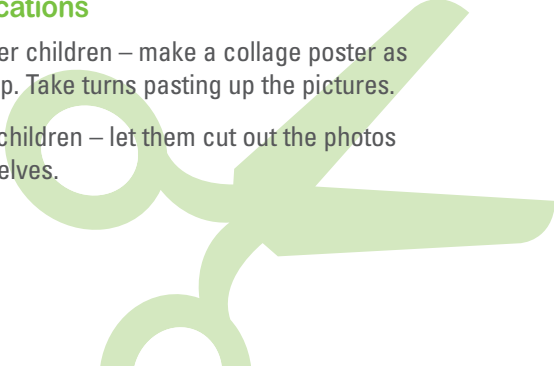
Create four collages, one for each food group.

Get the collages laminated so they can be used as placemats.

## modifications

Younger children – make a collage poster as a group. Take turns pasting up the pictures.

Older children – let them cut out the photos themselves.



Get the juicy details about healthy drinks. Kids love juice, but it is important to limit the amount they have to 1/2 to 1 cup per day. Stick with the juice that is 100% real fruit juice. It's a healthier option than fruit beverages or drinks.

# design a placemat

## goal

Children will learn which food groups their favourite foods belong to.

## supplies – provided

- *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*
- *Food Servings Sizes for Children 1 to 3 Years and 4 to 5 Years*

## supplies – needed

- Paper
- Crayons
- Markers

## how to play

- Have each child draw a picture of their favourite meal, for example, macaroni and cheese.
- Discuss which food group their favourite meal belongs in.
  - Macaroni and cheese contains grain products and milk products
  - Why do we eat grain products?
  - How many servings per day?
  - Why do we eat milk products?
  - How many servings per day?
- Encourage children to include all four food groups in their meal. For example, add a glass of milk or some apples for dessert
- If possible, laminate the pictures so they can be used as placemats. If lamination is not possible, put the placements in plastic page protectors

## alternatives

Make the placemats from flyer or magazine cut-outs instead of colouring.

Have the children make four placemats each, one for each food group. Or, divide the placemat into four quadrants so there is room to draw the favourite foods in each group.

Use this opportunity to teach table manners and handwashing (see page 29).

It can take a child 10 – 15 tries before they warm up to a new food. Introducing kids to a new food over and over again can help break the ice.

# restaurant

## goal

Children practice the skills needed to choose healthy foods when eating out.

## supplies – provided

- Menu

## supplies – optional

- Glue
- Pictures of food cut out from flyers or magazines
- Crayons, markers or coloured pencils
- Paper plate or toy plate
- Disposable cup or toy cup
- Napkins
- Toy cutlery

## how to play

- Create a make-believe restaurant in the play area.
- Decide who will be the server and who will be the customer.
- Use the menu provided. Have the children order their meals.
- Encourage the children to choose meals with all four food groups included.
- Help children set up a play kitchen and restaurant area with play food or pictures of food.
- Have the children take turns being the server and customer. Start with the breakfast menu and then switch and order lunch; switch again and order dinner.

## alternative

Have the children create their own menus using pictures from flyers and magazines or by drawing and colouring them.

Use this opportunity to teach table manners and handwashing (see page 29).

Helping hands create healthy habits. Let your “young chef” help prepare meals and snacks.

# build yourself a healthy lunch

## goal

Children learn the foods that belong in each food group, while learning how to make a nutritious lunch.

## supplies – provided

- The Four Food Groups cards

## supplies – optional

- Paper
- Crayons
- Brown paper bags

## what to do

- Have the food picture cards out on a table for children to select.
- Give each child a brown paper bag. Explain to the children that they are going to make themselves a delicious and nutritious lunch.
- Have each child select a picture of a food and put it in their lunch bag. Encourage children to select at least three out of four food groups.

## alternative

Have children pretend they are going grocery shopping. Encourage them to pick out a variety of foods from the The Four Food Groups cards.

## modification

Younger children – pre-fill each child’s lunch bag with a few food picture cards, and ask what foods and food groups they have in their lunch. If there are food groups missing, have the child pick out a food from the missing food group.

Find the foods that fit into *Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating*. Create meals that include at least three of the four food groups. Mix and match to build a balanced meal.

# give me five!

## goal

Children learn that we need to eat at least five items from the Vegetables and Fruit group every day.

## supplies – provided

- The Four Food Group cards

## supplies – needed

- Construction paper
- Crayons
- Pencils

## how to play

- Ask children where vegetables and fruits come from.
  - Some grow on trees (oranges, apples, bananas)
  - Some grow in the ground (potatoes, beets, carrots)
  - Some grow on vines or plants (peas, corn, melons)
- Ask children to show you with their fingers the minimum number of Vegetables and Fruit servings needed each day. (Raise five fingers and asked them to say aloud how many fingers.)
- Show the food picture cards of vegetables and fruit (or use the real thing). Ask questions such as:
  - What is this food?

- Has anyone tried this food?
- What is your favourite fruit?
- What is your favourite vegetable?
- Pass out construction paper. Have the children trace their hand with a pencil to make a food tree (they may need assistance)
- In each branch have the children write or draw one of their favourite fruits or vegetables.

## alternatives

Paste photos of vegetables and fruit found in flyers and magazines on the hand.

Make a big chart. Each time a child eats a vegetable or a fruit, they add one sticker to the chart.

Make healthy foods fun. Dips and sauces can help kids enjoy eating their veggies.

# food themes

## goal

To increase the children's knowledge of the diversity of food in the world, and to help them realize that food is related to many things, including culture, religion, special events, holidays and celebrations.

## how to play

- Read a story, sing a song, show a picture or other prop (e.g. chopsticks, bannock or something that is common in another culture) or simply have a discussion about an event, holiday or celebration. This may take some advance preparation (a couple of days or weeks ahead). You may want to get some help from the parents if you are planning to focus on certain ethnic dishes. Get the children involved as much as possible. In turn, they can ask their parents to help. It is always nice to share a part of your culture with others.

## Suggestions for themes

### January

- New Year's Day (January 1)
- Chinese New Year (or early February)

### February

- Valentine's Day
- Mardi Gras
- Flag Day (Mexico)
- Lantern Festival (Taiwan)

### March

- St. Patrick's Day
- The Doll Festival (Japan)
- Spring Equinox

### April

- Easter
- Passover (Jewish)

### May

- Planting a vegetable garden
- Mother's Day
- Cinco de Mayo (Mexico, May 5)

### June

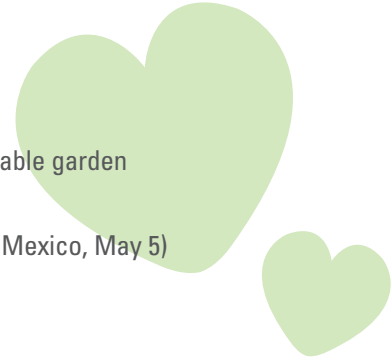
- Summer fruits
- Father's Day
- National Aboriginal Day (June 21)
- Summer Solstice

### July

- Food we barbeque
- Food we eat when camping
- Canada Day (July 1)

### August

- Birthdays (perhaps celebrate everyone's birthday together)





## September

- Autumn harvest
- Grandparents' Day
- Autumnal Equinox

## October

- Thanksgiving
- Halloween (October 31)
- Ramadan (Muslim)
- Diwali (Buddhist, Hindu) (October/November)

## November

- Foods from different cultures
- All Saint's Day (November 1)
- Remembrance Day (November 11)

## December

- Christmas
- Hanukkah (Jewish)
- Winter Solstice

Use your imagination or ideas from the children. Find out what their ethnic backgrounds are, and go from there.

See next page for a sample Halloween theme.

Why choose 2% milk? Serving 2% milk to children aged 3 to 5 will help their body get the right type of fat it needs to keep healthy.

# pumpkin, pumpkin, pumpkin (halloween theme)

## goal

To combine the theme of Halloween with healthy eating and increase children's knowledge of fruits and vegetables.

## warm up

*Bend and stretch, reach for the stars,  
There goes Jupiter, here comes Mars.  
Bend and stretch, reach for the sky,  
Stand on tippy toes, oh so high.*

## how to play

- Ask the children what things are associated with Halloween, and make a list.
- Examples include pumpkins, costumes, candy, witches, ghosts, candied apples, the colours orange and black.

- Activities you can do with a pumpkin
  - Discussion
    - Why do we eat vegetables and fruit? (For vitamins and minerals.)
    - What other vegetables and fruit are orange? (Carrots, oranges, peaches, sweet potato.)
    - What other vegetables and fruit start with the letter "p"? (Pineapple, peach, plum, pickle, papaya, pomegranate, potato.)
  - Draw a pumpkin or jack-o-lantern.
  - Talk about cooking with pumpkins. You can make pumpkin pie, eat pumpkin seeds (when they're cooked) or have pumpkin pancakes.

## alternative

Bring the children into the kitchen and make a recipe with pumpkin. Make pumpkin pancakes or muffins.



When teaching children to make healthier food choices, teach them to drink milk with meals and water to quench thirst.