

THE FOOD GUIDE PYRAMID FOR YOUNG CHILDREN Teaching Plan

(The only visual you will need for this lesson is a poster size copy of the Food Guide Pyramid For Young Children. Or you may choose to use transparencies of the pyramid. A black/white and a color copy are attached to the lesson. Or a copy can be obtained from www.usda.gov/cnpp/)

Agent says: For the next few minutes, I am going to talk about the Food Guide Pyramid For Young Children and discuss how it differs from the original Food Guide Pyramid. We will also discuss how you can use it when teaching young children in your care about good nutrition.

Agent says: (Show a visual of the Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children and refer to it as you discuss.) The Food Guide Pyramid is a guide to making healthy food choices. The Pyramid divides food into five major food groups: grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, and meat. What makes this food pyramid different from the original pyramid is that the foods shown are many of the ones that children know and like. It is important to keep in mind that each of these foods provides some, but not all, of the nutrients and energy children need. No one-food group is more important than another. For good health and proper growth, children need to eat a variety of different foods every day.

Agent says: The small tip of the Pyramid shows fats and sweets. These are foods such as salad dressings, cream, butter, margarine, sugars, soft drinks, and candies. These foods have a lot of calories from fat and sugars, but few vitamins and minerals, so we need to eat them only once in a while.

Agent says: We know that young children ages two to six years of age have unique calorie and nutrient needs. Some concern had been expressed that the original Food Guide Pyramid was not an appropriate guide. But, research conducted by USDA has found that the nutritional needs of children two to six can be met if they follow the recommended servings from each food group in the original guide.

Agent says: So why even change? The new Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children shows more appropriate serving sizes and foods that children typically eat. And the new guide can help teach young children about nutritious foods in a more user friendly way.

Agent says: Some of the ways the guide is different is:

- Foods are drawn in a more realistic style. They look like foods children would eat. They are easy for children to recognize.*
- The graphics show single serving sizes, which are more recognizable to young children.*

- *The food groups have shorter, single word names to help children learn and remember the groups.*
- *The number of servings for the food groups is a single number rather than a range.*
- *The Pyramid shows that two- to three-year-old children need the same number of servings as a four- to six-year-old, but they need smaller portions.*

Agent says: How do you encourage your children to make healthy food choices? (Let participants respond.)

Agent says: Those are all great ideas. Here are some more recommendations.

- ▶ *Be Patient. Young children may not be interested in trying new foods. Offer a new food more than once. Let the children see you and other children eating the new food. Sometimes it takes ten or more times of trying a new food out before a child will eat it.*
- ▶ *Be a Planner. Most children need a snack or two in addition to three regular meals. Offer foods from three or more groups for breakfast and lunch. Offer foods from four or more groups for the main meal. Offer foods from two or more groups for snacks.*
- ▶ *Be a Good Role Model. Eat meals with your children. Eating with the children provides many opportunities for learning together. What are some things you can learn when eating with children? (Allow participants to respond.)*
- ▶ *Try New Ways to Prepare Foods. Allow the children to help if at all possible. Serve the same food in different ways. For example serve broccoli raw, steamed, boiled or baked in a casserole.*

We have talked about the differences in the original Food Guide Pyramid and the Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children. We have also briefly discussed ways to get your children to eat healthier. Now let's look at a way you can help teach your children about the Food Guide Pyramid and healthy food choices.

Introduce the game, "Fishing For Nutrition". Allow participants to play a round or two if time permits.

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