

Using the MyPyramid Plan

A Lesson on Health

Purpose

Students will examine how their eating habits match established nutrition guidelines and gain skills to help them make better food choices.

Introduction

A healthy and diverse diet is linked to good health generally, and Americans today enjoy a bountiful selection of foods that are more affordable than ever. The Food Guide Pyramid, introduced by the USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion in 1992, was designed to provide dietary guidelines for Americans. It has since been replaced by the MyPyramid Plan, which goes further than the old pyramid by providing a more individualized system that accounts for differences in height, weight, gender, and amount of daily exercise.

Americans may have greater access to precise, individualized nutrition information, but it seems that too few are implementing what they know. About 62% of Americans were [overweight or obese in 2006](#). Most aren't eating enough fruits and vegetables, either. Researchers from the [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health](#) found that only 11% of American adults are meeting the USDA guidelines for eating fruits and vegetables. Sixty-five percent of those surveyed said they don't eat any fruit on a typical day and 25% said they eat no vegetables.

Possibly most alarming is the increasing prevalence of being overweight in both adolescent boys and girls. Just 36% of adolescents [meet current physical activity recommendations](#), and only about 20% eat the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Teens are drinking more soda than ever before, with average teenage boy [drinking two twelve ounce cans of soda](#) per day. More soda means less milk, which helps explain the 38% drop in milk consumption since 1977.

When students become more mindful about the foods they consume, and more closely align their eating patterns with the recommendations of the MyPyramid Plan and nutritional guidelines, they can improve their health now and for the future.

Directions

1. Give your LifeSmarts students a Practice Quiz to see what they know, and how they stack up against other LifeSmarts players.

2. Distribute a copy of the list of Important Terms to each student and ask students to use traditional or Internet resources to come up with definitions for each term.
3. Complete the LifeSmarts Activity, using the MyPyramid Plan and other resources.
4. Using their new-found resources, ask each student to write five multiple-choice and five open-ended LifeSmarts questions. Have students provide the source for each question.
5. Review the students' questions, and create a mini-quiz with 5-10 of the best multiple-choice questions. Use this as a post-test for the lesson.
6. Use the best 15-20 open-ended questions to run a LifeSmarts competition in class. Have two teams of four players compete to test their LifeSmarts.

LifeSmarts Practice Quiz: Using the MyPyramid Plan

1. To be called "low fat," a food may contain up to:
 - a. 1 gram of fat
 - b. 3 grams of fat
 - c. 5 grams of fat
2. Your aunt wants to lose weight and decreases her food intake. She does not exercise, so she will probably:
 - a. Add muscle mass
 - b. Gain body fat
 - c. Lose muscle mass
3. Serving sizes on the "Nutrition Facts" food label reflect:
 - a. A size that manufacturers want consumers to eat
 - b. Amounts closer to what people really eat
 - c. Amounts that are rounded to the nearest gram
4. Information that must be on the nutrition label includes:
 - a. Unsaturated fat
 - b. Water content
 - c. Serving size
5. Of the following foods, the best source of iron is:
 - a. Whole milk
 - b. Chicken
 - c. Breads
6. Oatmeal, dried beans, peas and bananas are all good sources of:

- a. Protein
- b. Fiber
- c. Iron

7. The Safe Food Handling Label must be attached to:

- a. Raw meat and poultry products
- b. Canned food
- c. Fresh fruit and vegetables

8. You want to increase your daily intake of green leafy vegetables and fortified breads and pasta. You do this to increase your intake of:

- a. Calcium
- b. Folic acid
- c. Vitamin D

9. To be called "low calorie" a food must have fewer than how many calories per serving?

- a. 5 calories
- b. 20 calories
- c. 40 calories

10. The typical American diet differs somewhat from the dietary recommendations set forth by the federal government. Which food group is most under-consumed by Americans?

- a. Meat
- b. Grain
- c. Fruit

LifeSmarts Practice Quiz: Using the MyPyramid Plan Answers

1. Correct Answer: b. 3 grams of fat

39% of LifeSmarts players got the question correct

2. Correct Answer: c. lose muscle mass

61% of LifeSmarts players got the question correct

3. Correct Answer: b. amounts closer to what people really eat

29% of LifeSmarts players got the question correct

4. Correct Answer: c. serving size

70% of LifeSmarts players got the question correct

5. Correct Answer: b. chicken

46% of LifeSmarts players got the question correct

6. Correct Answer: b. fiber

50% of LifeSmarts players got the question correct

7. Correct Answer: a. raw meat and poultry products
77% of LifeSmarts players got the question correct

8. Correct Answer: b. folic acid
39% of LifeSmarts players got the question correct

9. Correct Answer: c. 40 calories
35% of LifeSmarts players got the question correct

10. Correct Answer: c. fruit
51% of LifeSmarts players got the question correct

Extension

As a math exercise, have the students compute the percentage of students who correctly answered each question. This will help them determine how they measured up against the national LifeSmarts students who answered the same questions. Did their group have a higher percentage of questions answered correctly?

Activity: Using the MyPyramid Plan

LifeSmarts Activity

Students will examine how their eating habits match established nutrition guidelines and gain skills to help them make better food choices.

Resources:

The MyPyramid Plan [Website](#)
[Dietary Guidelines](#) for Americans, published May 2005
[Food and Nutrition Information Center](#)

Additional resources include: Web sites; the daily newspaper; specialized publications (or the online equivalents); local or state government publications and Web sites.

Procedures:

1. Tell students to write down everything they ate and drank yesterday. Or, alternately, ask students to keep track of everything they eat and drink for 1-2 days.
2. Have students determine the amount of each food group they need daily by using the [MyPyramid Plan](#).
3. Ask students to compare their results with the federal dietary recommendations.

4. Ask students to focus on the food group in which their consumption lagged furthest behind dietary guidelines. Ask students to go back over their eating journal and make recommendations for additions or substitutions they could make to better align their diet with their MyPyramid Plan.
5. Discuss overall findings as a class.
 - a. Did students do better or worse than Americans as a whole (See information in Introduction to this lesson)?
 - b. How will students implement what they learned?
 - c. Why does a good diet matter?
 - d. What new information surprised students?

Extensions:

1. Ask students to research current information linking a healthy diet to a specific health benefit. For example, recent studies seem to show that eating dark, leafy greens such as kale, spinach, and collards is good for eye health. Have students report their findings to the class.
2. Ask students to create meal plans that meet MyPyramid guidelines for a day, or a week.

Important Terms to Know: MyPyramid

1. **Daily Values** – Reference numbers on the food label based on current nutrition recommendations set by the government.
2. **Diet** – What a person eats and drinks each day.
3. **Dietary Guidelines for Americans** – Publication produced by federal government that provides advice about how good dietary habits can promote health and reduce risk for major chronic .
4. **Empty-calorie foods** – A caloric food without any nutrients in it.
5. **MyPyramid Plan** – a personal eating plan that helps consumers identify the foods and amounts that are right for an individual. It promotes eating a variety of foods to help ensure a person receives all of the nutrients required while maintaining a healthy weight.
6. **Nutrients** – A substance or compound that provides nourishment, food.
7. **Nutrition**—The act of taking in and utilizing foods.
8. **Nutrition Facts** – Found on most packaged food labels, nutrition facts help consumers get the facts on a particular food and easily make comparisons.

9. Percent Daily Values – Found on most packaged foods, this is a part of the food label. It gives a general idea of the food's nutrient contribution to a reference diet.

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