

## Background Information for Teachers

- Orange vegetables, like carrots, sweet potatoes and winter squash, are the best sources of Vitamin A. It is essential for healthy vision and a strong immune system.
- Vitamin C is found in many red fruits and vegetables like red peppers, tomatoes and strawberries. Vitamin C is an essential nutrient for proper wound healing.
- Carbohydrates are our main source of energy. Whole grains like brown rice, oatmeal and whole grain breads give us energy, fiber and important B vitamins.
- Meat, poultry, dry beans, eggs, nuts and seeds are rich sources of protein, B vitamins, iron, zinc and magnesium. Protein rich foods build, maintain and replace tissues in the body and they help build strong muscles.
- Choosing water and low-fat milk are healthy options for beverages. Sugary drinks (pop, juice, sports drinks) add extra calories and can harm teeth.
- Healthy food choices look different from one family to the next. Being aware of children’s ethnic and cultural background can help you know how to best teach them about healthy food choices.
- Lead by example—children make more healthy choices when they see adults including healthy habits in their lives.

## GOAL

Children will know healthy food choices.

## Healthy Habits-My Plate throughout the day

### At Meals and Snacks

Help create conversations at meals and snacks that reinforce healthy food choices. After children begin eating, invite them to count and compare the things on their plate, saying something like “I wonder how many green beans you have now that you ate one? How many beans does Rachel have?” Children will begin counting and comparing as they continue to eat.

Model healthy habits: sit with your class at meal times and eat fruits and vegetables and a My Plate-balanced meal!

### Centers

Make available Dairy Council Food Cards and other pictures of foods as an activity for children to make a healthy plate. Be sure to include foods that are culturally relevant to your students and families. (If you don’t know be sure to connect with your families and ask them). It may fit into your **math/games/puzzles center** (colors/shapes) or **science/discovery center** (categorizing fruits and vegetables). Consider using a resource book to guide children in their choices.

## Healthy Habits

## My Plate Example Lessons

Prepare materials for a group collage about healthy food and put these materials at a long table. Give children the opportunity to contribute to a group-made collage of foods. Let them cut out pictures of foods from magazines and glue them onto a large piece of ...paper. Add decorative materials if desired. Whenever possible write their comments about the food such as why they chose it and what is healthy about it.

Make a T Chart on large paper and place in the **math/games** area. Give the children a set of dairy council cards that can be sorted into two categories (protein and fruit for example.) Make sure you have pre-taught some critical information so that children have ideas about how to tell the difference. Join the children who have chosen this area and ask them to tell you why they made the category choices they made.

If you use model foods in **dramatic play**, be sure to have many examples of healthy choices. Have separate baskets for fruits, vegetables, protein, grains and dairy. Collect empty containers from your families to include culturally-relevant healthy foods and add these to your shelves. Find well-illustrated cookbooks in languages that represent the children in your classroom and add these to your home center.

### Transitions

Sing one of your songs or chants about healthy choices and or foods/food groups.

As you dismiss students from circle time ask them to identify a healthy food that is a color they are wearing today. For example-A child wearing a red shirt might say strawberries. Have the Dairy Food Council Food Cards available to help prompt children who need support.

### Home-School Connection

Send home a newsletter or class letter that gives parents the information that you are teaching children about nutrition and My Plate.

Ask parents to tell you about fruits and vegetables they eat or prepare for their family that are different from the ones you serve in your classroom.

Set up a cooking demonstration by a parent to introduce a new healthy food to the children in your classroom.

Use the books Bread, Bread, Bread or Rice, Rice, Rice as a template for creating book pages. Send the template home to your families and ask them to draw or write about the type of bread or rice that is a regular part of their family meals.

Ask parents to send in any empty boxes or other containers of foods they eat at home that include whole grains.

### Ideas and Notes: