



Grades k-2

## Lesson #1

### Introduction to MyPlate and the Food Groups

**Welcome to the *Fit4Kidz* nutrition program! In this first lesson, we will start with the basics – an overview of the food groups and how to create a balanced diet using these groups as guidelines.**

**The information in this first lesson is in part derived from the USDA's MyPlate initiative and will utilize some tools from the program. For more information, visit [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov).**

#### Time Table

##### Total Time: 30 minutes

**10 minutes:** Introduction and explanation of the lesson

**5 minutes:** PowerPoint Presentation

**15 minutes:** Activity and pass out take-home assignment.

**Goal:** Introduce students to the different food groups as outlined by MyPlate and provide them with an understanding of how to use the food groups as a tool for creating a healthy, balanced diet.

#### Objectives:

Students will

- Learn about the different food groups and the types of foods in each group
- Understand the importance of using the food groups to "build a healthy plate" in order to maintain a well-balanced diet.
- Learn about oils and empty calories and how they factor into the food group model of meal planning

#### Materials:

- PowerPoint: *Fit4Kidz Guide to My Plate and Food Groups*
- Activity:
  - *Fit4Kidz Guide to MyPlate and the Food Groups*
  - *Fit4Kidz Teacher's Guide to MyPlate and the Food Groups*
  - Magazines, scissors, glue
  - Markers, colored pencils or crayons
- Take Home: *Fit4Kidz Guide to MyPlate for Parents and Families*



### Instructions:

1. MyPlate is a program based on the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which is a tool to help individuals choose healthy food options. MyPlate organizes foods into five groups with an emphasis on using the groups to “build a healthy plate” at meal times.
2. Begin the lesson by introducing the students to the food groups. Many will already be familiar with this concept, so invite the students to help you list the different food groups as you write them on the board.
3. The five food groups presented by MyPlate are as follows:
  - a. Grains Group
  - b. Vegetable Group
  - c. Fruit Group
  - d. Dairy Group
  - e. Protein Foods Group
4. Review each group outline below with the class and have the students help you fill in examples of foods that belong in each group.
5. **Grains Group** – Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another grain. Examples: bread, pasta, oatmeal, rice, breakfast cereals, tortillas.
  - a. Help students to understand the difference between whole grains and refined grains.
    - i. **Whole grains** contain the entire grain kernel. Examples are: whole-wheat flour, oatmeal, whole grain bread, and brown rice.
    - ii. **Refined grains** have been processed to remove parts of the grain kernel. These are generally the “white” grain products, such as white flour, white bread, and white rice.
    - iii. As a general rule, whole grains are much more nutritious than refined grains.
6. **Vegetable Group** – Any vegetable or 100% vegetable juice. Vegetables are organized into 5 subgroups, based on their nutrient content. It is important to eat a variety of vegetables of all different colors. Examples from each group are:
  - a. **Dark Green vegetables** – broccoli, collard greens, spinach, dark green lettuce, kale
  - b. **Red/Orange Vegetables** – squash, red peppers, sweet potatoes, tomatoes
  - c. **Beans & Peas** – black beans, lentils, chickpeas, soy beans
  - d. **Starchy Vegetables** – potatoes, corn, lima beans, green peas
  - e. **Other Vegetables** – asparagus, avocado, cabbage, celery, cucumbers, onions, green beans, zucchini, mushrooms
7. **Fruit Group** – Any fruit or 100% fruit juice. Examples: apples, berries, bananas, pears, plums, peaches, nectarines, pineapple, grapes, raisins, oranges
8. **Dairy Group** – All milk products and many foods made from milk. Dairy Group choices should be fat-free or low-fat. Calcium-fortified soymilk is also part of the Dairy Group. Examples: milk, chocolate milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream, soymilk



9. **Protein Foods Group** – All foods made from meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts, and seeds. Choose lean or low-fat meat and poultry products. Examples: chicken, fish and seafood, eggs, soy products, lean cuts of beef, pork, turkey, peanut butter and other nuts/seeds.
10. After reviewing these food groups with the class, talk briefly about **oils and “empty calories.”**
  - a. Oils are fats that are liquid at room temperature. Certain oils, such as olive oil and canola oil, are heart healthy and can contribute to a healthy, balanced diet
  - b. Empty calories are calories from foods that have little or no nutritional value, such as candy and other junk foods. These foods should be mostly avoided or eaten in moderation.
11. Next, proceed to the activity, which outlines how the groups should be used to make up a healthy meal.

#### **Activity:**

Use the *Fit4Kidz Teacher’s Guide to the MyPlate and the Food Groups* to explain the activity to the class. Pass out a copy of the MyPlate to each student, which outlines the different food groups that should be present at each meal. Explain to the class that the different food groups are also broken up by size, which shows how much of each type of food should be eaten. Also point out that junk food, such as high-fat and high-sugar foods and drinks, do not have a place in the MyPlate healthy meal outline.

Using the MyPlate image as a guide, have each student create his or her own idea of a healthy meal. They can add foods to the different groups by drawing them in or cutting and pasting images from magazines. Ask the students to share the foods they selected and to state whether or not they think these are healthy meal choices.

#### **Take Home:**

Have the students take the *Fit4Kidz Guide to MyPlate for Parents and Families* home with them for their parents to review.

For further reference, students and families can visit [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) and [www.fit4kidz.us](http://www.fit4kidz.us).