

# Background

## Healthy Steps for Healthy Lives Nutrition and Physical Activity Background

This background is intended to provide educators with a review of knowledge necessary to facilitate the instructional activities in the Healthy Steps for Healthy Lives™ program. While this is not an exhaustive basis of content for nutrition and physical activity, the concepts explained reflect a consensus of the general knowledge suggested for kindergarten through third graders. Sources for additional information are also provided.

The content in the Healthy Steps for Healthy Lives program is based on information from the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Provided by the United States Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS), the Dietary Guidelines are jointly issued and updated every five years. The Dietary Guidelines provide evidence-based information and guidance on how to promote health through improved nutrition and physical activity. MyPlate is a new generation icon designed to help communicate the dietary guidelines. The intent is to prompt consumers to build a healthy plate at meal times, and encourage them to seek more information at [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov). The new MyPlate icon is based on a familiar meal time image – a place setting – and emphasizes the fruit, vegetable, grains, protein and dairy food groups. The Healthy Steps for Healthy Lives program will help you use MyPlate as a teaching tool with your students.

### THINK Healthy

A common understanding of what being healthy means will provide a solid foundation for students to learn and utilize health-enhancing behaviors. For students to set meaningful and reachable goals about nutrition and physical activity, they need to understand the bigger picture of what it means to be healthy. MyPlate is a good starting point. MyPlate encourages students to eat a balanced nutritious diet and to be physically active every day.

### EAT Healthy

*How do we EAT Healthy?*

#### 1. Build a healthy plate.

MyPlate illustrates the five food groups using something we see at mealtimes, a place setting. MyPlate uses different colors to show portions of each food group on the plate and in the cup. MyPlate reminds us that we need to eat foods from all food groups every day at every meal.



#### Topics to discuss with students to help facilitate conversations about being healthy

- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Hydration
- Sport and play safety (e.g., following the rules, wearing proper protective equipment)
- Taking care of our families
- Taking care of our pets
- Visiting the doctor
- Taking care of our teeth
- Taking care of our bodies (e.g., frequent hand-washing, getting enough sleep)
- Car-riding safety
- Healthy careers
- Internet safety



## Healthy steps to build a healthy plate

Before you eat, think about what goes on your plate or in your cup or bowl. Foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean protein foods contain the nutrients you need without too many calories.

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- Switch to skim or 1% milk.
- Make at least half your grains whole.
- Vary your protein food choices.

## 2. Eat the right amount of food [calories] for you.

The food group portion sizes vary on the plate and in the cup to suggest the approximate ratio of the amount of food you should eat from each food group. That means that your diet should include more of some food groups and less of others. With just a quick glance you can tell which food groups you should be eating the most of. You can also quickly see that half of your plate should be fruits and vegetables.

### Understanding recommended average daily intake amounts

- ChooseMyPlate.gov provides recommended average daily intake amounts in terms of total volume or weight for the day (e.g., instead of five servings of vegetables per day, the recommendation is 2 ½ cups).
- If children are familiar with the amount that counts as a portion for each food group and the number of portions they should eat to make up the total recommended volume or weight, then they can estimate when they have eaten the right amount from each group every day. In order to help students understand how to eat a healthy amount, we provide the daily intake amount in terms of not only total volume or weight but daily total portions and also what counts as a portion.
- The recommended average daily intake amounts are based on caloric intake. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines provide recommendations for daily caloric intake based on characteristics such as age and how physically active a person is. The information in this program is based on an average recommended caloric intake for children ages 5-9 with a range of physical activity levels. Use the USDA SuperTracker to get your personal daily intake amounts at [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov).

Food group	Total daily amount	Daily portions	Estimated size of one portion
Grains	6 ounces	6	1 ounce
Vegetables	2 ½ cups	5	½ cup
Fruits	1 ½ cups	3	½ cup
Dairy	2 ½ cups	2 ½ cups	1 cup
Protein	5 ounces	2	2 - 3 ounces

Note: based on a 1,800-calorie pattern.



### 3. Cut back on foods high in solid fats, added sugars, and salt

Many people eat foods with too much solid fat, added sugar, and salt (sodium). Foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean protein foods contain the nutrients you need without too many calories. Added sugars, solid fats, salts, and foods made up mostly of these ingredients, should be consumed in moderation.

- Choose foods and drinks with little or no added sugars.
- Added sugars and fats load foods with extra calories you don't need.
- Don't make treat foods an everyday choice. Limit sweet treats to special occasions.
- Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals and choose the foods with lower numbers.
- Too much sodium may increase your blood pressure.
- Oils are not a food group; some oil every day is needed for good health. Most people get enough oil in the foods they eat, like nuts, fish, cooking oil, and salad dressings. Foods with solid fats are not sources of healthy oils.

It is important to eat the most healthy, nutrient-rich foods from each of the food groups. Our bodies receive nutrients from each of the food groups that are vital to our health. A balanced diet is needed because these nutrients work together once they get inside us. The right balance of the right foods enables each food to do its job.

#### Common nutrients found in food groups:

	Calcium	Fiber	Carbohydrates	Protein	Iron	Potassium	Vitamins	Minerals
Grains		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Dairy	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
Vegetables		✓				✓	✓	✓
Fruits		✓				✓	✓	✓
Protein				✓	✓		✓	✓

- Carbohydrates give us energy.
- Calcium builds strong bones and teeth.
- Protein builds muscle.
- Fiber helps us feel full and helps the food we eat move through our bodies.
- Vitamins help us stay healthy in many ways.
  - Vitamin A helps keep our skin healthy.
  - Vitamin C helps our wounds heal.
  - Vitamin D helps our bones stay strong.
- Minerals help convert the food we eat into energy.
  - Iron is a mineral that helps carry oxygen in our blood.
  - Potassium is a mineral that is good for our hearts by helping lower our blood pressure.



## MOVE Healthy

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### How do we MOVE healthy?

It is universally recommended that elementary school-age children accumulate a total of **at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day**. Physical activity is bodily movement. In life, we are physically active in several ways, such as through recreation, sports, and play. We are also physically active through daily tasks such as walking our dogs or raking leaves. The goal of 60 minutes of physical activity can be achieved by moving throughout the day in bouts. Physical activity accumulated each day should include bouts of both moderate and vigorous intensity levels. One of the main ways to know if you are doing moderate or vigorous activity is that vigorous activity makes your heart beat even faster than moderate activity.

It is important for children to understand that while it is necessary to participate in tasks that require us to be sedentary (such as sleeping, eating, and even some of our daily activities at school), it is also important to avoid prolonged periods of inactivity (sedentary activities). As educators we can help students reach their 60 minutes and avoid long periods of inactivity by providing opportunities for moderate movement in our classrooms by combining movement with learning. Several of the Healthy Steps for Healthy Lives instructional activities do just that.

We want students to know how to get enough physical activity the healthy way, so concepts such as staying hydrated and wearing protective equipment when necessary are also important to teach. The recommendation for how much water a person needs each day varies depending on factors such as age, climate, and level of involvement in physical activity. The recommendation for children ages 4 - 8 is five servings of water every day. Most adults need six to eight servings of water every day. One serving of water is 8 ounces.

### Why do we MOVE healthy?

Children gain physical and mental health benefits from daily physical activity.

#### Health benefits of physical activity:

- Increase your chances of living longer.
- Reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease (heart disease).
- Reduce your risk for chronic diseases like diabetes.
- Reduce your risk of some cancers.
- Be a healthy weight.
- Strengthen your bones and muscles.
- Increase your energy level.



### Other benefits that can be interpreted as health benefits for an overall sense of well-being:

- Increase your performance in school – helps you learn better.
- Improve your mood and feelings – helps you feel good about yourself.
- Be a productive and helpful member of society.

### Health risks of being sedentary for long periods of time over the course of your life:

- Increased chance of having an unhealthy weight
- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Increased chance of certain cancers
- Stroke
- High blood pressure



### For more support:

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- [www.nestleusa.com/healthysteps](http://www.nestleusa.com/healthysteps)
- [www.neahin.org/healthysteps](http://www.neahin.org/healthysteps)
- [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)
- [www.dietaryguidelines.gov](http://www.dietaryguidelines.gov)
- [www.letsmove.gov](http://www.letsmove.gov)
- [www.nationaldairycouncil.org/childnutrition/Pages/ChildNutritionHome.aspx](http://www.nationaldairycouncil.org/childnutrition/Pages/ChildNutritionHome.aspx)
- [www.healthiergeneration.org/parents](http://www.healthiergeneration.org/parents)
- [www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/physicalactivity/guidelines.htm#1](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/physicalactivity/guidelines.htm#1)
- [www.nflrush.com/play60/ways-to-play](http://www.nflrush.com/play60/ways-to-play)
- [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/index.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/index.htm)
- [www.projectwet.org](http://www.projectwet.org)
- [www.bnetsavvy.org](http://www.bnetsavvy.org)

### Integrate technology education with these free online educational games and activities for your students:

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- [www.foodchamps.org](http://www.foodchamps.org)
- [www.fns.usda.gov/multimedia/Games/Blastoff/BlastOff\\_Game.html](http://www.fns.usda.gov/multimedia/Games/Blastoff/BlastOff_Game.html)

