

My Future, MyPlate & Physical Activity

Create MyPlate for Teens Grades 6-8

MATERIALS NEEDED

MyPlate poster, physical activity cards, snack ingredients

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Students will learn about the importance of eating foods from all food groups, how establishing healthy patterns now is important for long-term health and the importance of exercise.

Utah Health Education Standards 2; Objectives 1-3

1. Objective 1: Describe the components and benefits of proper nutrition.
2. Objective 2: Analyze how physical activity benefits overall health.
3. Objective 3: Recognize the importance of a healthy body image and develop appropriate weight management behaviors.

SNAP-Ed Message

1. Students will learn that your body needs foods from all of the food groups daily.
2. Students will identify the five food groups and identify how much of each group is recommended daily.
3. Students will learn and review MyPlate facts.
4. Students will taste a food in each of the 5 food groups.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (not to be taught as part of the lesson)

1. Adolescence is a time of extreme nutritional demands because of the long duration of adolescence coupled with intense biological growth.
2. Middle schoolers are particularly influenced by social settings and are motivated by their peers.
3. This age group's diet tends to lack whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and dairy foods while consuming 17% of their calories from fast food and a significant portion from snacks.
4. Diet and exercise are the most modifiable factors for preventing chronic disease.
5. The patterns that students establish now will follow them forward, by instilling healthy habits at a young age, middle school students have the opportunity to powerfully shape their future.

TEACHING THE LESSON: My Future, MyPlate (25-30 minutes)

Anchor (3 minutes): *What is healthy?*

Junior high (or middle school) is an important time for growth, both for your body and your brain!

This could be a journal prompt or class discussion (give them a couple minutes):

What does it mean to be healthy? Have you ever thought about how the things you right now could impact your future? If there was something you could do today that would help keep you healthy for life, would you do it?

You may also be gaining new responsibilities right now and creating habits that could stick with you for a long time, including habits like exercising and eating healthy. This means that right now, you are in a really powerful position to affect your health immediately and in the future!

Add (2-5 minutes): *Chronic diseases often have roots in childhood.*

Who knows what a chronic disease is? How is a chronic disease different from something like a cold or strep throat?

Chronic diseases are illnesses that last a long time, sometimes they can last for life, and they aren't caused by germs. How would having a chronic disease impact your life or plans for your life? Do you think that mainly older people have chronic diseases or do young people have them too?

About 10% or 1 in 10 youth ages 12-19 have elevated blood pressure, which is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Many youth are also developing type 2 diabetes, which impacts how your body processes foods and uses it for energy. These are diseases that can really take a toll on your overall health and well-being, but they can also be prevented!

Apply (10 minutes): MyPlate activity

This is MyPlate. (show MyPlate poster) It gives us a guide to eating healthy so that we can make sure we're getting all of the nutrients we need to help us stay fit and prevent chronic diseases.

(Introducing MyPlate includes covering all of the food groups, middle school students should have a fair grasp on those but may not know serving sizes, amount to eat, immediate and long-term benefits to each group. This exercise is designed to utilize their existing knowledge and encourage critical group thinking about the pieces they don't know)

Each food group will be labeled on separate walls (will have to double-up on one wall, give plenty of room)

Kids will have access to a pile of nutrition cards with things like serving sizes, examples of foods, key nutrients, vitamins, minerals, ways the foods support health (there will be duplicates!). Place this pile in the middle of the room. You can let them all work together.

Explain to students that they need to try to get the cards matched to the appropriate food group. When they've finished, they may have left some cards on the table, that's fine. You can place them as you walk through each food group and go over the activity.

Once they're done, ask some questions about the experience:

- Was this pretty easy or difficult?
- What made it easy/hard?
- Is there anything you see that you think might belong to a different food group?

Handout note sheet for students before beginning to go over all the correct answers but *after* the discussion to avoid students filling in the incorrect answers!

*Idea: Add in some foods that don't belong on MyPlate? Butter (not considered dairy b/c high fat content and low nutrient content), juice drinks (needs to be 100% juice to count as a serving of fruit), fries (technically a veg, similar

situation to butter + high sodium), cupcakes, find some more examples—all of these things are fine to eat but we need to moderate them*

Away (10-15 minutes): *Activity follow-up and note sheets*

Start going through the food groups and the correct answers with the students:

- Make sure to praise the correct answers that they put up at this point, “great job, you guys know so much!”
- Go through each group, allowing students to ask questions and fill in their note sheet if applicable
- Point out the different sizes of foods on the MyPlate poster: half the plate is fruit/veg, etc.

An important thing to remember about eating a diet that includes all of these groups, is that even small increases in how much you eat can have big health effects!

But eating healthy doesn’t just have important health benefits, did you know that students who practice healthy eating habits, like eating breakfast, drinking less soda and eating fruit and vegetables often have higher grades than those who don’t?

Why do you think that kids who eat breakfast have higher grades than those who don’t? (it’s hard to focus on school when you’re hungry, you don’t feel good, you need energy to pay attention and do schoolwork)

Out of all our organs, our brain uses the most energy! That could also be part of why having healthy eating habits is linked to having better grades.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: Types of Physical Activity (10-15 minutes)

Anchor (2 minutes): *Physical activity discussion*

Exercise and physical activity is also linked to better health and better grades. How many of you did PE today or play sports? Why else is exercise important?

That's right! Exercise is important for building strong muscles and bones, improving mood and sleep, and maintaining a healthy weight. But exercise and physical activity are also fun! What kinds of physical activity do you find fun?

Does anyone know how many minutes of exercise you need each day? What happens if we don't get enough exercise? (weight gain, higher risk for chronic disease, etc.)

Add (2 minutes): *types of physical activity and recommended amount*

The recommended amount of exercise for junior high schoolers is an hour of moderate to vigorous activity a day! Unfortunately, most middle schoolers don't get that much.

There are 3 main types of exercise, and we all need a combination of them. Do you know what those 3 types are?

- aerobic activity which uses large muscle groups and makes you breathe harder
- strength or resistance training which helps strengthen muscles
- flexibility which improves the ability of joints and muscles to stretch and bend

Apply (5 minutes): *Game*

We're going to do a little exercise to see how some common activities fit into each of these categories.

Distribute the cards and explain that no one is allowed to talk or show their cards. Everyone receives a card with an activity/exercise on it. Without talking, they have to try and sort themselves into the appropriate exercise groups by doing their movements (may have to adjust movements to be accessible). They can be silly during this! Encourage them to get creative, use props like books or water bottles as weights, use their desk to imitate a biking motion. Could also make this competitive: first group to get all their people wins.

Examples of cards (should find simple illustrations of these):

Strength: bicep curls or lifting weights push-ups, squats, lunges

Aerobic: jumping jacks, dancing, swimming, running in place, biking,

Flexibility: touch their toes, triceps stretch, butterfly stretch, side reach, arm across, arm circles, ankle rolls**

Away (1 minute): Challenge for them to incorporate all types of physical activity

Great job everyone! We will learn more about these types of exercise in upcoming lessons, including how to set goals for yourself. Think about how you might be able to incorporate each type of physical activity into your week.

HEALTHY SNACK

SOURCES

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