

Lesson 1.1: Eat More Fruit and Vegetables

Background (Read before you teach): Eating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables daily is strongly related to better health, according to the 2015-2020 [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). Dark green, red, and orange vegetables and dried beans and peas are important sources of [fiber](#), [potassium](#), folate, magnesium, vitamin A, vitamin C, and several other nutrients. Eating more fruit and vegetables reduces risk of cardiovascular disease and may protect against some types of cancers. When prepared without extra fat or sugar, fruits and vegetables are also low in calories. Maintaining a healthy weight is easier when people eat plenty of fruit and vegetables as part of an overall healthy diet and lifestyle.



Eating healthy together (USDA repository)

Teaching Tip: The rainbow of colors will help participants think about the different colors of fruits and vegetables and share how their families enjoy these foods. Note that the color is the edible part of the fruit or vegetable. For example, bananas are white, not yellow. Highlight dried beans (under brown) as a vegetable, as well as a protein source.

Target Audience: Mexican-origin families with children, 3-8 years

Key Message: Eat a wide variety of fruits and vegetables every day

Objectives: By the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:

- Identify the health benefits of eating more fruit and vegetables;

- Identify ways to add different types of fruit and vegetables to meals and snacks; and
- Identify at least one parenting tip they can use to help their children eat more fruit and vegetables.

Materials:

- Tape and different colors of construction papers (orange, yellow, red, green, purple, white, brown);
- Post-it notes and pencils;
- A few colorful fruits and vegetables (like mango, tomatoes, cilantro, lemon);
- Supplies and recipes for food demonstration (suggested Mango Salsa).

Handouts: Mango Salsa recipe; [MyPlate](#) mini-posters ([Spanish](#) or [English](#))

Set-up before class: Tape papers on the walls around the room, display fruit and vegetables on front table

Opening (Anchor): (10 min) Welcome! Today, we will be talking about what you can do to help your family eat a wider variety of fruits and vegetables every day.

Begin the discussion with an open-ended question.

- **Ask:** Who has a child who loves eating vegetables? Who has ever battled with your child to get him or her to eat vegetables? How many have had the same experience with fruit? Why is it so difficult for parents?

Lesson (Add): (15 min) Discuss the following points:

- **Ask:** What are the benefits of eating fruit and vegetables?

Fruits and vegetables have a lot of vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

A healthy diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables helps prevent cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and some cancers.

A few examples show how vitamins or minerals keep us healthy. Vitamin C, found in tomatoes, melons, lemons, oranges, berries, and peppers, helps the body to fight infections. Potassium, found in spinach, other leafy greens, bananas, and beans, keeps muscles and nerves healthy and is important for normal blood pressure. Fiber, found in beans, helps relieve constipation.

- **Ask:** Why is it important to eat a wide variety of fruits and vegetables?

Since fruits and vegetables vary in the amounts and types of nutrients they contain, the best way to get all the benefits is to choose a wide variety of both fruits and vegetables.

(Show the assortment of fruits and vegetables on display.) The different colors of fruits and vegetables reflect the variety of nutrients and healthful components of these foods.

- **Ask:** Do Mexican-origin families eat enough fruit and vegetables?

While recent immigrants tend to eat more fruit and vegetables, over time their children begin to eat less of these foods.

Many families are only eating about half the amount they need to stay healthy. About half your plate should be fruits and vegetables (show My Healthy Plate—we will learn more about it later).

- Of course, young children may eat a lot less of these foods. Forcing them to eat will not teach them to like the foods. Instead, try some of the smart parenting strategies below. **Ask:** What can parents do to help their children eat more fruit and vegetables?
 - Be a good role model. Eat fruit and vegetables with your children.
 - Prepare fruits and vegetables with your children. Even young children can help wash a fruit or tear up lettuce.
 - Make it fun! How? Use fruit to make a face on a pancake; read a story about fruit or vegetables.
 - Combine new foods with others that are already well-liked. For example, add fruit to a lettuce salad.
 - Add more vegetables to the main dishes, like soups, stews, tostadas.
 - Dried beans (either boiled or refried with vegetable oil) also count as a vegetable. Keep on serving these foods regularly to your family.
 - Be patient. Try again another time. Children may need to try a new food many times before they learn to like it.
 - Keep cut-up fruit and vegetables in the refrigerator to make it easy to eat.
 - Above all, avoid giving in and offering another meal if your child refuses to eat. Plan meals to include at least one familiar food that your child will eat.

Activity (Apply): (25 min) While the assistant sets-up the food demonstration, the educator leads participants in the rainbow of colors activity.

- **Say:** As we just discussed, fruits and vegetables contain vitamins, minerals, and many other nutrients. Some of these nutrients give fruits and vegetables their color. Therefore, you can use color to choose a variety of fruits and vegetables every day. Most people—adults and kids alike—need to eat a wider variety of fruits and vegetables. Next, we will see how some of your favorite fruits and vegetables can provide a variety of nutrients.
- (Showing the tomato, mango, cilantro, and lemon), **Ask:** which of the colors on the wall best matches the color of these foods?
- Give participant post-it notes and pencils. Tell them to write the name of at least one fruit or vegetable that their family likes. Write one name on each post-it note. **Say:** Let's decide where each note belongs. Invite participants to share different ways they eat these foods.
- Food demonstration, tasting and sharing: Prepare and share the mango salsa. As you make the salsa, talk about the variety of colors. Mention that many young children do like fruit, so combining favorite foods with new ones is a good strategy to encourage children to eat. **Ask:** What are some ways that your children can help prepare this recipe? How can you use it at home? What do you like about the recipe? What would you change?

Closing (Away): (10 min) Pair-up and set specific goals

What did you learn? Why is this information important to you? Choose a goal to work on this month (or week). Try to choose small changes that you can make within a week. For example:

- Try a new vegetable this week
- Offer a vegetable to my child as a snack twice this week
- Use vegetables of 3 different colors in 2 family meals this week

Write your goal on the recipe handout. Ask a friend or family member to help support you in reaching your goal. Invite families to share their goals.

Educator's background: Use this chart to help place foods

Color	Examples	Benefits of Fruits and Vegetables
Red	Red onion Red chilies Tomatoes Red grapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May reduce the risk of cancer, heart disease, and complications from diabetes. • May help control high blood pressure. • Help the body get rid of cancer-causing chemicals. • May slow some effects of aging. • Helps maintain good vision. • Strengthens the immune system. • May strengthen bones and teeth. • Help the body heal wounds. • Keep skin healthy. • May reduce the risk of infection. • May help lower high cholesterol.
Dark Orange	Summer squash (like butternut) Cantaloupe Carrots Mandarin	
Yellow	Yellow corn Lemon Pineapple Grapefruit	
Yellow/Green	Cabbage, green Honeydew melon Kiwi fruit	
Green	Broccoli Cilantro Spinach Chard	
	Bananas	

White or Tan	Cauliflower Onions, white White Corn Zucchini	
Blue or Purple	Blueberries Plums Eggplant Purple cabbage	

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