



VEGETABLES AND FRUITS —SIMPLE SOLUTIONS



TARGET AUDIENCE:
parents with children
2 through 18 years old



GROUP SIZE:
5 to 7
participants



NEEDED TIME:
45
minutes

▶ SESSION OVERVIEW

This session is intended to help busy parents and caregivers include the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables in their daily meals and snacks and offer ways to encourage their children to eat fruits and vegetables. Participants will discuss the difficulties of including fruits and vegetables in their family's meals. Facilitate a discussion about solutions to problems identified by the group. Using sample vegetables, participants will sort vegetables into groups that include dark green, red, orange, dry beans and peas, and other vegetables. Then participants will measure 1-cup and ½-cup portions of fruits and vegetables. They will be able to visualize what 2 cups of fruits and 2½ cups of vegetables look like (the recommended amount for a 2,000-calorie diet). Participants will then brainstorm ways to encourage their children to eat fruits and vegetables followed by a discussion of which methods work best and why. Finally, participants will identify two new ways to include vegetables and fruits in their meals during the upcoming week. They will also identify at least one way to encourage their children to eat fruits and vegetables each day.

▶ BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

After the session participants will be able to:

- Identify at least two new vegetables and two new fruits to eat during the upcoming week.
- Identify at least one way to encourage children to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Recognize what 1 cup of vegetables and 1 cup of fruits look like.

▶ KEY MESSAGES:

- A family needs a variety of different colored vegetables and fruits each day for good health—not just one type.
- Eat fruits and vegetables at meals and snacks. Pick fresh, frozen, canned, or dried and go easy on fruit juice.

DISCUSSION SESSION

▶ MATERIALS NEEDED FOR SESSION:

- Markers
- Nametags
- Highlighters or pencils (one per participant)
- Flipchart
- Samples of vegetables and fruits to measure and display.
- MyPlate mini-poster—Make sure everyone has a copy.
- Handouts for parents and caregivers: *What Counts as 1 Cup?*, *Choose Your Veggies*, and *Keep Fruits Handy*
- Optional handout for kids: *Have Fun With Fruits and Vegetables Word Search*

▶ OUTLINE OF 45-MINUTE SESSION:

- Welcome and introduction to *Vegetables and Fruits—Simple Solutions* (5 minutes)
- Discussion group activities (35 minutes)
- Sum up and home activity (5 minutes)

Review the information in the handout *What Counts as 1 Cup*. For additional information, review the Fruits and Vegetables Food Group Sections, *What Counts as a Cup*, at ChooseMyPlate.gov. Each food group section offers detailed information about what's in the food group, how much is needed, health benefits and nutrients, and additional tips to use, as time permits.



▶ WELCOME TO VEGETABLES AND FRUITS—SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

Welcome participants and ask them to make their own nametag (first names only). Make sure each has handouts *What Counts as 1 Cup*, *Choose Your Veggies*, and *Keep Fruits Handy*, and a highlighter. Mention other points of interest as needed, such as the location of restrooms and water fountains.

▶ BEGIN:

What is your favorite fruit? Give participants time to call them out. Write responses on flipchart and/or tape pictures of mentioned foods to a flipchart or wall. Repeat question with vegetables.

► **DISCUSSION GROUP ACTIVITIES:**

Tell the parents and caregivers in the group they will be talking about:

- The types and amounts of vegetables and fruits needed each day to make meals healthier.
- Easy and low-cost fruits and vegetables to include in their daily meals.
- Ways to help children eat fruits and vegetables.

► **ASK:**

How many cups of fruits and vegetables do you think each member of your family eats each day? What are some reasons your children may not eat many fruits and vegetables?

Provide time for participants to share their responses for each question before moving to the next one. Write responses on a flipchart.

► **POINT OUT:**

Plan meals that include the right amount of fruits and vegetables for each member of your family.

The amount of fruits and vegetables recommended for a 2,000-calorie daily food plan are 2 cups of fruits and 2½ cups of vegetables. (Refer to the MyPlate mini-poster.)

Younger children will need less fruits and vegetables, and active teens and men may need more fruits and vegetables—choose different types of produce including fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruits and vegetables.

Offer children no more than 1 cup of juice each day and serve water when they are thirsty instead of sugary drinks like soda, fruit drinks, or sport drinks.

Look for ways to save money on vegetables and fruits. Share flyers and circulars from local stores with produce sales and show coupon samples to help participants better understand the resources available.

► **HANDOUT REVIEW:**

Share low-cost ways to buy vegetables and fruits in the handouts *Choose Your Veggies* and *Keep Fruits Handy*. Review tips on serving vegetables and fruits listed in the handouts and ask participants to share their ideas.

► **CONTINUE:**

Let a participant measure ½ cup and 1 cup of some fruits or vegetables and put them on a plate to visualize what that amount looks like on a plate. Let another participant measure 1 cup of fruit juice into a glass. Ask if this is more or less than what they eat or drink at home.

Ask participants to share with the group how they prepare their favorite vegetable or fruit or how they use fruits and vegetables in meals for their family. Record ideas on the flipchart.

Then ask parents and caregivers if they have tried some less common fruits and vegetables such as papaya, brussel sprouts, or eggplant. Have a list of suggestions handy based on your audience. Make a list of these fruits and vegetables on the flipchart. Consider the cultural preferences when preparing your list. Ask parents and caregivers to share ways they could fix the different types of fruits or vegetables.

Encourage the parents and caregivers to try fruits and vegetables that are new to them. (Note: If you have samples of fruits and vegetables, encourage parents and caregivers to taste samples.)

► SUM UP:

Let one participant measure or pick 2 cups of fruits from the display and one participant measure or pick 2½ cups of vegetables from the display. Point out this is the amount a person would need for a 2,000-calorie plan. Refer to the handout for *What Counts as 1 Cup?*

Refer to the handouts for a variety of fruits and vegetables that could be used in meals and snacks. If your budget permits, prepare recipes to share from www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov, especially ones that use dark-green, red, or orange vegetables. Select simple recipes, with 5 to 10 ingredients, that participants are likely to prepare at home.

► HOME ACTIVITY:

Refer to the *Choose Your Veggies* and *Keep Fruits Handy* handouts. Have each participant name at least two vegetables and two fruits on the handouts that they will try during the upcoming week. Encourage them to include at least one dark-green, red, or orange vegetable.

Close session by reinforcing ways to help children learn to eat more fruits and vegetables. Offer the optional handout *Word Search: Have Fun With Fruits and Vegetables*. Suggest that parents and caregivers use the puzzle with kids to share and reinforce what they learned during class.

For more information visit
www.ChooseMyPlate.gov/myplateformyfamily.html.



November 2014
Food and Nutrition Service
*USDA is an equal opportunity
provider and employer.*