

# Vegetables and Fruits

## Simple Solutions

### SESSION OVERVIEW

This session is intended to help busy mothers include the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables in their daily meal plans and learn 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. An educator will facilitate a discussion about solutions to the problems identified by the group. Ideas shared by group members will be recorded on a flipchart. Using sample vegetables, participants will sort vegetables into their *MyPyramid* sub-groups (dark green, orange, starchy, dry beans and peas, and other vegetables). Then participants will measure ½-cup, 1-cup, and ¼-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 some ways to encourage their children to eat fruits and vegetables followed by a discussion of which methods work best and why. Finally, mothers will be challenged to identify and commit to try two vegetables and two fruits during the upcoming week with at least one vegetable being a dark green or orange one. They will also identify and commit to at least one activity to encourage their children to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables each day.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** Mothers with children between the ages of 2 and 18

**GROUP SIZE:** 5 to 7 participants

**NEEDED TIME:** 45 minutes

### BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

**After the session participants will be able to:**

- Identify and commit to try at least two vegetables and two fruits during the upcoming week with at least one vegetable being a dark green or orange one.
- Identify and commit to at least one activity to encourage their children to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Recognize what a 1-cup portion of vegetables and a 1-cup portion 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.
- Most families need to increase their intake of dark green and orange vegetables and dry beans and peas.

### MATERIALS NEEDED FOR SESSION

- Nametags/markers
- Highlighters or pencils (one per participant)
- Flipchart/markers

- Samples of vegetables and fruits to measure and display (See handout sheets, *What counts as one cup of vegetables?* and *What counts as one cup of fruits?*).
- *MyPyramid* poster – Hang poster at eye level so everyone can see it.
- Resources for mothers:
  - *The Healthy Family Guidebook*
  - *What counts as one cup of fruits?* handout
  - *What counts as one cup of vegetables?* handout
  - **Kids' Activity Sheets:** Order or download at [www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/)

## HINT:

Use empty boxes or cans for food samples. Food models or pictures can also be used. If your budget permits, have sample fruits and vegetables to taste.

### 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 on the handouts *What counts as one cup of fruits?* and *What counts as one cup of vegetables?* For additional background information, review “**Inside the Pyramid**” on the USDA website, [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov). The section on “**Tips to help you eat,**” for each of the food groups, provides additional information to use in your discussion, as time permits. Also review the information on pages 8-14 in *The Healthy Family Guidebook*.

## WELCOME TO VEGETABLES AND FRUITS – SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

Welcome participants and ask them to make their own nametag (first names only). Make sure each has a copy of the two handouts, *What counts as one cup of vegetables?* and *What counts as one cup of fruits?*, the *Guidebook*, 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 food to flipchart or wall. Repeat question with vegetables.

## DISCUSSION GROUP ACTIVITIES

### CONTINUE:

Tell the mothers the group will be talking about:

- Planning the types and amounts of vegetables and fruits needed each day to make meals healthier.
- Including easy and low-cost fruits and vegetables in their daily meals
- Helping their children learn to 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 mothers to share their responses for each question before moving to the next one. Write responses on flipchart.

### POINT OUT:

- *MyPyramid* shows you how much to eat – the amounts for a 2,000-calorie meal plan are 2 cups of fruits and 2½ cups of vegetables (Point to the *MyPyramid* poster). Review the handouts with the mothers to help them understand what counts as 1 cup of fruits or vegetables. Note that younger children may need less fruits and vegetables and active teens and men may need more fruits and vegetables.
- Eating a variety of vegetables helps your family get what they need to be healthy. Help mothers identify vegetables in each of the subgroups: dark green, orange, starchy, dry beans and peas, and other vegetables. Together let them arrange the vegetables in your display according to the subgroups. Refer them to page 9 in the *Guidebook* and the back page (My favorite vegetables) of the *What counts as one cup of vegetables?* handout.
- Fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruits and vegetables are smart choices – only drink enough juice to get up to half of the fruit needed for the day, no more than 1 cup per person for a 2,000-calorie meal plan. It's not necessary to have fruit juice every day.
- Smart, low-cost ways to get vegetables and fruits in your meals and snacks – review low-cost ways to buy vegetables and fruits on pages 9 and 13 in the *Guidebook*.
- Helping kids learn to eat fruits and vegetables – ask participants to share their ideas. Then, review tips on serving vegetables and fruits on pages 10 and 14 in the *Guidebook*. Serving fruits and vegetables in fun ways, offering them for meals and snacks, and letting children help prepare foods will help them eat more fruits and vegetables.

### THEN:

- Let a participant measure ½ cup and 1 cup of some fruits or vegetables and put them on a plate to visualize what it looks like on a plate. Let a mother measure ½ cup of dried fruit onto a plate. Let another participant measure 1 cup of fruit juice into a glass.
- Ask each mother to share with the group how she prepares her favorite vegetable or fruit (use listing from introductions to guide this discussion), or how she uses fruits and vegetables in meals for her family. Record ideas on flipchart.





- Then let each mother name fruits and vegetables they have not tried. Make a list of these fruits and vegetables on the flipchart.
- Ask the other mothers to share ways they could fix the fruits or vegetables that might taste good or encourage the mothers to try the fruits and vegetables. (Note: if you have samples of fruits and vegetables, encourage mothers to taste the ones that they have not tried.)

### 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 menu plan. Refer to the handouts for *What counts as one cup of fruits and vegetables?*
- Point to pictures of foods on the *MyPyramid* poster for ideas on fruits and vegetables. Refer to the handouts for the variety of fruits and vegetables that could be used in meals and snacks. Mention that there is more information and easy menus and recipes in their *Guidebook* (pages 8-14). If your budget permits, prepare one of the recipes to share – especially one that uses dark green or orange vegetables.

### HOME ACTIVITY

- Give each mother a highlighter or pencil and ask her to highlight or circle on the handouts at least two vegetables and two fruits that she will try during the upcoming week. Encourage them to include at least one dark green or orange vegetable.
- Close session by reinforcing ways to help children learn to eat more fruits and vegetables. Encourage mothers to highlight or circle one of the tips on pages 10 and 14 of the *Guidebook* that they will try at home in the upcoming week.

### TIP:

Give Kids' Activity Sheets to participants to take home to their children.



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