

Eating well for good health



Lessons on nutrition and healthy diets



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nutrition
and
healthy diets

by

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Nutrition Officer

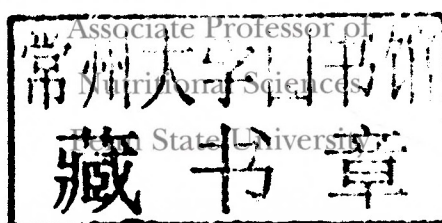
Nutrition Education and

Consumer Awareness

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and

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Foreword

Everyone wants to be healthy and lead a full, active life. And most people know that to help them be healthy, they need to eat properly. Yet, many people make their food choices for reasons other than good nutrition and health. The availability of foods and their cost are often the primary considerations for people's food choices, but there are many other almost equally important reasons why people eat the foods they eat. Time constraints and convenience, religious practices and cultural traditions, personal likes and dislikes, everyday habits and lack of knowledge and skills all affect people's food choices. Whatever the reasoning behind them, the food choices that people make can have long-lasting effects on their health and well-being.

Around the world, millions of people suffer the consequences of poor diets. Diets that provide less food than people need, or an inadequate variety of foods or more food than people need may all lead to potentially serious health and medical conditions which can handicap people for life. Many of these problems can be prevented by eating a varied, nutritionally adequate diet. Tragically, some of these problems, such as blindness in children resulting from vitamin A deficiency, are not reversible once they happen, although they are preventable through proper diets.

To eat well for good health, people need the knowledge and the practical skills to make the best food choices possible and to practise good, life-long eating habits. Both in circumstances where food choice is limited and where food choice is seemingly limitless, understanding the body's food needs and knowing the nutritional value of foods can help people prepare more healthful meals and follow good diets.

Even with the best of intentions, however, it is not always so easy for people to know which food choices or dietary practices are the best for them. Access to scientifically sound and easily understandable information on nutrition and diets is often a problem. For some people, there is little or no information available; for others there may be too much or conflicting information. Nutritional science is constantly developing, sometimes creating confusion among consumers, as new discoveries replace previous information and advice. In the media and on the web, information on diets and nutrition abounds, much of it not adequately interpreted and some of it not scientifically well-founded. And much information, good and bad, is passed around informally, as people share their own theories on nutrition and healthy diets.

It is to address this lack of good information on healthy diets and eating habits that these lessons have been developed. The lessons provide a simple presentation of basic information on food, nutrition and health to help people understand the connection between what they eat and their health. The purpose is not to train people to be nutritionists, but to help them improve their everyday skills in making good food choices, planning and preparing healthful meals, protecting the quality and safety of the foods they eat and in establishing healthful personal habits and lifestyles.

Aimed primarily at the middle and secondary school level, the lessons can be used by students and teachers in the classroom, individuals outside the classroom and by groups in non-formal settings. The approach is activity-based, with less emphasis on reading and more on learning by doing, with a variety of activities, exercises, investigations and analysis that can be done in groups or individually. In all, over 140 activity sheets and fact sheets are provided to help make learning easier and, it is hoped, more enjoyable.

The lessons were originally designed for the web, in order to reach a wide audience. The print version has been prepared with the recognition that many users and most classrooms around the world do not have easy access to computers and the internet. Readers are invited to also visit and use the web version of the Eating well for good health lessons on the *Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger* website <http://www.feedingminds.org/fmfh/nutritionlessons>.

While it is best if good eating habits start at an early age, so that they can be practised throughout life, good habits can be acquired at any age. It is never too late to gain health benefits from following a balanced, varied and nutritionally adequate diet. It is hoped that these lessons will provide a basic foundation to help and encourage people of all ages to eat well and be as healthy as they can be.

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Topic 1
What it means
to be healthy
and well-nourished

Lesson 2
Analyzing the conditions
that affect nutritional
status

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Introduction

Welcome to *Eating well for good health*, a learning module designed to explore basic concepts of good nutrition, health and healthy diets. Eating well helps keep us healthy and active and thus improves our enjoyment of life. Good diets and eating habits are fundamental for proper growth and development and for the prevention of disease. Poor diets and poor nutrition can lead to a number of different and very serious health problems. Many of these problems handicap people for their entire lives; some of them lead to death. Learning how to meet our nutritional needs throughout life by making good food choices for a healthful, balanced diet can help us prevent some very debilitating health problems caused by poor nutrition.

Eating well for good health requires a basic knowledge of foods and the nutrients they provide and an understanding of our nutritional needs throughout the various stages of life. With this knowledge we can practise good, life-long eating habits that will help us be as healthy as we can be.

These lessons are meant for anyone who wants to learn how to improve their diets and eating habits. While oriented toward use in the classroom, the lessons can also be used by groups outside the classroom, such as youth groups or community or religious groups, and by individuals who want to learn on their own. The intended classroom level is middle and secondary school students. In non-formal settings outside the classroom, the lessons are appropriate for individuals or groups with an educational or learning ability at this level or higher. Teachers and youth and community group leaders are encouraged to adapt the lessons to fit the needs of their particular age-group and circumstances. All users are welcome to use the web version of the lessons at <http://www.feedingminds.org/fmfh/nutritionlessons>

Four main topics have been selected to explore and learn: 1. *What it means to be healthy and well nourished*; 2. *What we get from food*; 3. *How to eat well for good health*; and 4. *Healthful habits and lifestyles*. Each topic includes 2 or 3 separate lessons, each of which has an overview, learning objectives, questions to think about while reading, reading content, activities and accompanying materials and key points to remember. The complete module, covering all four topics, includes a total of eleven lessons.

Module structure and content overview



Topic 1 What it means to be healthy and well-nourished is about the many factors that affect our health and well-being. It explains how our nutritional status depends both on our personal choices and on fundamental conditions such as nutritious food, clean water, medical care and education. It shows how poverty is an underlying cause of most forms of malnutrition and discusses the serious health problems caused by poor nutrition. It describes the most common problems of poor nutrition, their signs and symptoms.

Lesson 1 Exploring the meaning of good health and well-being

Lesson 2 Analysing the conditions that affect nutritional status

Lesson 3 Understanding problems of poor nutrition



Topic 2 What we get from food is about the nutrients we get from foods and how important it is for proper growth and development and prevention of disease to eat the right variety and the right amounts of foods that provide these nutrients. It explains the functions of carbohydrates, protein, fats, vitamins and minerals in the body and their importance in the diet. It provides some examples of foods that are good sources of these nutrients.

Lesson 4 Learning about carbohydrates, protein and fats

Lesson 5 Learning about vitamins and minerals



Topic 3 How to eat well for good health is about how to make good food choices for a healthy balanced diet throughout life. It describes the different nutritional needs at different stages of life and discusses the importance of developing good dietary practices and eating habits. It includes practical advice on how to choose clean, fresh and nutritious foods and how to store and prepare them safely at home.

Lesson 6 Meeting nutritional needs throughout life

Lesson 7 Making good food choices and healthy meals

Lesson 8 Keeping foods safe and nutritious



Topic 4 Healthful habits and lifestyles is about how body weight, physical activity, good personal hygiene and clean surroundings affect our health. It explores what a healthy body size is and how to achieve a healthy weight by keeping energy in balance. It discusses the importance of physical activity and fitness for good health and weight. It explains how protecting ourselves from germs that cause disease is an important part of keeping well and healthy.

Lesson 9 Achieving healthy body size and weight

Lesson 10 Keeping fit and active

Lesson 11 Keeping ourselves, our water and our surroundings clean

How to use the lessons

The *Eating well for good health* lessons can be used both in the classroom by students and teachers, and outside the classroom by groups of people or individual learners exploring the issues of health and nutrition on their own. Every lesson contains each of the sections below. Longer lessons covering several different concepts are divided into separate lesson parts, each one with its own lesson reading, questions to think about, materials, activities and key points. It is suggested that each lesson part be taught or studied as a separate lesson.

The full lessons are available on the website, where additional copies of all of the materials can be downloaded in PDF and printed (<http://www.feedingminds.org/fmfh/nutritionlessons>).



LESSON OVERVIEW

Every lesson starts with a short summary of the information presented in that lesson. Teachers can use the overview to introduce the main concepts of the lesson to their students, while individual learners can review it to understand what the lesson is about.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This section lists things learners should know and be able to do by the end of the lesson. It can be used during the lesson to remind students of the skills they are to learn and to help them focus their attention on the main issues. It can also be reviewed at the end of the lesson to evaluate the knowledge, skills and attitudes that have been acquired.



READING

This section contains the basic reading material that provides the core information of each lesson part. The reading should be printed out, projected on walls or screens or copied in notebooks, on blackboards or flipcharts. It can be read individually, in groups or aloud to the whole class. The text should be studied and discussed before doing the activities.



TO THINK ABOUT WHILE READING

This section contains key questions to reflect on before, during and after reading the text. Teachers can use these questions to introduce the “Reading” or as a starting point for discussion and exchange of opinions on the topic of the lesson. Individual learners can use the questions to reflect on the concepts presented in the lesson.



ACTIVITIES

A range of different types of activities – individual thinking and analyses, group discussions, matching games, quizzes, true or false statements, community research and assessment – is provided for people to choose from depending on their ability, needs, interests and time. The activities are based on the “Reading” and are designed to help learners test their understanding of the basic concepts of the lesson and apply it to their own lives. Most of the activities can be carried out with limited resources and can be done by both individual and group learners. Teachers can also create new activities to suit their students’ needs and cultural backgrounds.



MATERIALS

A number of fact sheets, work sheets, exercises, quizzes and other materials are provided for each lesson. They can be adapted and enriched according to the needs of the learners and the settings in which they are being used. Some of the materials contain additional, more detailed information to complete the “Reading” section that can be used as a handy reference or as information to take home from school or share with others. Other materials are designed to be used as work sheets during the activities. They should be printed out or copied in notebooks, on blackboards or flipcharts so that they can be completed in groups or individually.



KEY POINTS

Every lesson part concludes with the key points to understand and remember. These points can be used for discussion and further investigation of the topics presented in the lesson section. They can also be used to evaluate learners’ understanding of the topic. Groups and classes can use them as “take home” messages to share with family and friends.

Contents

List of materials	v
Foreword	ix
Acknowledgements	xi
Introduction	xiii
Module structure and content overview	xiv
How to use the lessons	xv

Topic 1 What it means to be healthy and well-nourished 3

Lesson 1	Exploring the meaning of good health and well-being 5
Part 1	The dimensions of health 6
Lesson 2	Analysing the conditions that affect nutritional status 19
Part 1	Fundamental conditions for good nutritional status 20
Part 2	Malnutrition: poor nutritional status 25
Lesson 3	Understanding problems of poor nutrition 37
Part 1	Problems of undernutrition 38
Part 2	Problems from a lack of vitamins and minerals 42
Part 3	Problems of “overnutrition” 49

Topic 2 What we get from food 71

Lesson 4	Learning about carbohydrates, protein and fats 73
Part 1	Carbohydrates: their functions and good food sources 74
Part 2	Protein: its functions and good food sources 79
Part 3	Fats: their functions and good food sources 82
Lesson 5	Learning about vitamins and minerals 107
Part 1	Vitamins: their functions and good food sources 108
Part 2	Minerals: their functions and good food sources 115

Topic 3 How to eat well for good health 137

Lesson 6 Meeting nutritional needs throughout life 139

- Part 1 Nutritional needs in pregnancy and breastfeeding 140
- Part 2 Nutritional needs of babies and infants (0–24 months) 145
- Part 3 Nutritional needs of children 2–10 years 149
- Part 4 Nutritional needs of adolescents (11–17 years old) 151
- Part 5 Nutritional needs during illness 155
- Part 6 Nutritional needs of older people 157

Lesson 7 Making good food choices and healthy meals 187

- Part 1 Eating habits and healthy diets 189
- Part 2 Shopping for good foods 196

Lesson 8 Keeping foods safe and nutritious 225

- Part 1 Food quality and safety in the shops, markets and streets 226
- Part 2 Protecting the quality and safety of food at home 229

Topic 4 Healthful habits and lifestyles 249

Lesson 9 Achieving healthy body size and weight 251

- Part 1 Achieving and maintaining a healthy body size 252

Lesson 10 Keeping fit and active 275

- Part 1 Being fit and active 276

Lesson 11 Keeping ourselves, our water and our surroundings clean 287

- Part 1 Personal hygiene: keeping our bodies clean 288
- Part 2 Clean and safe water 293
- Part 3 Clean living conditions 298

List of materials

Topic 1 What it means to be healthy and well-nourished

Lesson 1 Exploring the meaning of good health and well-being

Work sheet: Proverbs and sayings about health 11

Work sheet: Making a contribution despite health problems 12

Work sheet: Personal choices affecting our health 13

Example work sheet: Personal choices affecting our health 14

Example work sheet: Basic public services 15

Work sheet: Community services and people's health 16

Into the field work sheet: How does your community rate? 17

Lesson 2 Analysing the conditions that affect nutritional status

Quiz work sheet: Nutritional status: true or false? 29

Work sheet: Fundamental conditions for good nutritional status 30

Example work sheet: Fundamental conditions for good nutritional status 31

Match it work sheet: Malnutrition facts matching 32

Quiz work sheet: Malnutrition: true or false? 33

Work sheet: Vicious cycle of poverty and malnutrition 34

Example work sheet: Vicious cycle of poverty and malnutrition 35

Work sheet: An emergency happened in our town 36

Lesson 3 Understanding problems of poor nutrition

Match it work sheet: Undernutrition facts matching 51

Fact sheet: Problems of poor nutrition and their signs and effects 52

Match it work sheet: Linking deficiencies with health problems 55

Quiz work sheet: Lack of micronutrients: true or false? 56

Quiz work sheet: Micronutrient deficiency facts 57

Fact sheet: Iron deficiency anaemia 59

Fact sheet: Iodine deficiency 62

Fact sheet: Vitamin A deficiency 65

Example work sheet: Good food sources of iron, iodine and vitamin A 68

Work sheet: Problems related to obesity 69

Quiz work sheet: Overweight and obesity: true or false? 70

Topic 2 What we get from food

Lesson 4 Learning about carbohydrates, protein and fats

- Fact sheet: Basic macronutrient facts: carbohydrates 87
- Ask yourself work sheet: Carbohydrates in my diet 88
- Answer work sheet: Carbohydrates in my diet 90
- Match it work sheet: Carbohydrates facts matching 92
- Work sheet: Carbohydrates around the world 93
- Fact sheet: Basic macronutrient facts: protein 95
- Ask yourself work sheet: Protein in my diet 96
- Answer work sheet: Protein in my diet 97
- Work sheet: Foods rich in protein 98
- Work sheet: Protein around the world 99
- Fact sheet: Basic macronutrient facts: fats 101
- Ask yourself work sheet: Fats in my diet 102
- Answer work sheet: Fats in my diet 103
- Work sheet: What foods are high sources of fats? 104
- Work sheet: Fill in the gaps 105
- Match it work sheet: Macronutrients facts matching 106

Lesson 5 Learning about vitamins and minerals

- Fact sheet: Vitamins, their functions and good food sources 121
- Ask yourself work sheet: Vitamins in my diet 124
- Answer work sheet: Vitamins in my diet 126
- Match it work sheet: Vitamins matching game 127
- Quiz work sheet: Vitamins: Who am I? 128
- Fact sheet: Minerals, their functions and good food sources 129
- Ask yourself work sheet: Minerals in my diet 132
- Answer work sheet: Minerals in my diet 134
- Match it work sheet: Minerals matching game 135
- Quiz work sheet: Minerals: Who am I? 136

Topic 3 How to eat well for good health

Lesson 6 Meeting nutritional needs throughout life

- Fact sheet: Nutrition during pregnancy and breastfeeding (mother) 160
- Fact sheet: Weight gain during pregnancy 162
- Match it work sheet: Maternal health 163
- Work sheet: Good foods to eat during pregnancy 164
- Work sheet: Eating well during pregnancy 166
- Fact sheet: Breastfeeding babies (0–6 months) 167
- Work sheet: Personal childhood timeline 168

Into the field work sheet: Community interview 169
 Fact sheet: Nutrition of children 6 months – 2 years 170
 Work sheet: Start the day right 172
 Work sheet: Colourful lunch bags 173
 Fact sheet: Nutrition of school-age children 174
 Work sheet: My food diary 176
 Ask yourself work sheet: How good is your diet? 177
 Work sheet: My meal analysis 179
 Work sheet: Help Andrew pack his lunch 180
 Fact sheet: Good nutrition and HIV/AIDS 181
 Match it work sheet: Feeding sick people 183
 Ask yourself work sheet: Keeping healthy in older age 184
 Answer work sheet: Keeping healthy in older age 185

Lesson 7 Making good food choices and healthy meals

Ask yourself work sheet: My food choices 200
 Work sheet: Why do people eat the foods they eat? 201
 Fact sheet: Food-based dietary guidelines 203
 Ask yourself work sheet: Analysing dietary guidelines 212
 Work sheet: My food guide for better health 214
 Work sheet: Mixed meal model 215
 Work sheet: Eating traditions around the world 217
 Match it work sheet: Food shopping and meal planning 218
 Quiz work sheet: Food choices: true or false? 219
 Work sheet: My seasonal fruits 220
 Work sheet: My seasonal vegetables 221
 Work sheet: Reading food labels 222
 Fact sheet: Understanding and using food labels 223

Lesson 8 Keeping foods safe and nutritious

Fact sheet: Basic conditions for selling food 232
 Fact sheet: Choosing good quality foods 233
 Match it work sheet: What to look for when buying food 235
 Into the field work sheet: Food safety inspection – fresh fruits and vegetables 236
 Into the field work sheet: Food safety inspection – dry, non-perishable foods 237
 Into the field work sheet: Food safety inspection – fresh, perishable foods 238
 Fact sheet: Recognizing signs of spoiled, poor quality foods 239
 Quiz work sheet: Recognizing signs of good or spoiled food 240
 Into the field work sheet: School canteen inspection 242
 Fact sheet: Prepare and cook food properly 243
 Fact sheet: Store food properly 244
 Match it work sheet: Tips on how to preserve nutrients in foods 245
 Into the field work sheet: Household food safety inspection 246
 Work sheet: Jumbled foods 248

Topic 4 **Healthful habits and lifestyles**

Lesson 9 **Achieving healthy body size and weight**

- Fact sheet: How is BMI calculated and interpreted? 259
- Work sheet: Calculating and evaluating adult body size 260
- Example work sheet: Child BMI and growth charts 261
- Work sheet: Evaluating children's growth and weight 266
- Work sheet: Fill in the gaps 267
- Ask yourself work sheet: Calculating energy balance 268
- Answer work sheet: Calculating energy balance 271
- Fact sheet: Energy balance equation 273

Lesson 10 **Keeping fit and active**

- Ask yourself work sheet: Health benefits of physical activity 279
- Answer work sheet: Health benefits of physical activity 280
- Ask yourself work sheet: Understanding activity levels 281
- Ask yourself work sheet: Aerobic, strengthening and stretching activities 282
- Example work sheet: Aerobic, strengthening and stretching activities 283
- Ask yourself work sheet: My physical activity 284
- Fact sheet: Intensity levels of physical activity 285

Lesson 11 **Keeping ourselves, our water and our surroundings clean**

- Fact sheet: The truth about germs 302
- Quiz work sheet: Germs: true or false? 305
- Fact sheet: 12 steps to good hand washing 306
- Match it work sheet: Proper hand washing 308
- Ask yourself work sheet: My personal hygiene 309
- Fact sheet: Keeping yourself clean and free from germs 310
- Fact sheet: Basic facts about water 314
- Match it work sheet: Water facts matching 318
- Fact sheet: Easy ways to make water safe to drink 319
- Fact sheet: Health problems from unsafe water 322
- Ask yourself work sheet: How clean is my water? 324
- Into the field work sheet: How good is your community water supply? 326
- Quiz work sheet: Clean living conditions: true or false? 327
- Fact sheet: Basic practices for a clean and safe home 328
- Fact sheet: Basic practices for a clean and safe community 330
- Ask yourself work sheet: Home inspection 332
- Into the field work sheet: Investigation: How clean and safe is my school? 335
- Into the field work sheet: How clean is my community? 338

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