

## Why Do We Eat Food? Lesson Idea

### Objectives

- Recognize that foods contain nutrients the body needs.
- Recognize the role of nutrients in helping the body grow and stay healthy.

### Prepare

- Bring to class several foods representing the various food groups: dry beans, a box of cereal, bread, an apple, a bunch of broccoli and a carton of fat-free milk. Or use food illustrations from the [What Foods Do You Need?](#) Activity Sheet.
- Download and print the [What Foods Do You Need?](#) Activity Sheet for classroom distribution.

### Materials

- [What Foods Do You Need?](#) Activity Sheet.

### Explore

1. Encourage children to think about how food helps them by asking the following questions: *Have you ever seen a picture of yourself when you were a baby? How have you changed since you were a baby?* Children may give several answers. Emphasize that one important change is that they have grown taller and larger as they have gotten older. Explain that nutrients from food help them grow taller and gain weight. If necessary, point out that nourishing parts of food such as vitamins and minerals are called *nutrients*.

Ask children to bend one arm up and feel their biceps muscle, and then feel the bones in their wrists and lower arms. Explain that nutrients from food help their bones and muscles grow and stay strong.

Have children jump up and down. Explain that nutrients from food give them energy to work and play. *Have you ever been sick and had to stay home in bed?* Explain that most people get sick sometimes, but nutrients in food help them stay well and get well quickly when they do get sick.

Then ask children to give big smiles. Explain that nutrients from food help them have healthy teeth as well as healthy skin and hair.

Finally, write the following poem on chart paper and read it together:

I went looking for a nutrient...  
I went searching far and wide.  
Then I looked into my lunch box  
And found lots of them inside!  
Nutri... nutri... nutrient—  
It's where we get "nutritious."  
Lots of things with nutrients  
Are yummy and delicious!

2. Give children the [What Foods Do You Need?](#) Activity Sheet. Explain that various foods contain different nutrients that help their bodies in different ways. Tell children that proteins are important nutrients in food. Proteins help them grow and stay well. Have children look at the sheet and name specific foods that contain proteins.

Explain that carbohydrates in food give their bodies energy. *What foods can we eat to get carbohydrates for energy?* Next, have children look at foods that provide fiber. Explain that the fiber they get from foods helps them digest food and helps keep their teeth and gums healthy. If necessary, explain that digest means to break food down into pieces that are small enough to be used by the body. *What foods can we eat to get fiber?*

Explain that many different foods contain various vitamins and minerals. Convey to children that some foods are richer sources of nutrients than others. It is the combination of these nutrients working together that helps us grow and stay healthy.

3. Display the foods you have brought: beans, bread, cereal, apple, broccoli, fat-free milk. Hold the beans up. *What helpful nutrients does a bean have?* (Proteins, vitamins, minerals) *What nutrients does bread have?* (Carbohydrates, fiber) *What nutrients does cereal have?* (Carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins) *What nutrients does an apple have?* (Carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins) *What nutrients does broccoli have?* (Fiber, vitamins, minerals) *What nutrients does fat-free milk have?* (Proteins, vitamins, minerals)

*You've seen that each of these different foods contains different nutrients that help your body in different ways. What do you think is the best way to get all the different nutrients that you need?* Guide children to conclude that eating different foods from all the groups every day can help guarantee that all necessary nutrients are included in a person's diet. Suggest that a wide variety of foods in the diet is good and that eating too much of anyone kind of food is not a good idea.