

Parent Communications— Fruits and Vegetables Theme

Adapted from President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2006, Food & Fun After School Unit 7 Parent Communications.

Newsletter article: Use this *Planet Health* article in your class or school newsletter. Think about publishing a *Planet Health* message each month to help parents and students tune in to healthy lifestyle choices and tune out of screen time.

An Apple a Day? Here's How

Everyone knows the old saying “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Even so, many Americans still have trouble including enough fruits and vegetables in their diets. Fruits and vegetables contain vitamins, minerals, and fiber, all essential for proper growth and development in children. For adults, a diet rich in fruits and vegetables helps protect against heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and possibly some cancers. And, everyone can benefit from the fiber and water in fruits and vegetables, which create a feeling of fullness and keep the digestive tract working well.

So, how can you boost fruit and vegetable intake in your family's diet? The key is to make the foods more available and accessible and to model healthy habits for your kids. If all else fails, try sneaking fruits and vegetables into dishes you already prepare! The following are some tips for success:

- Be prepared. Always have a supply of cut-up, prepared fruits and vegetables in the refrigerator for snacking. Store them in clear containers at eye level.
- Serve 'em up. Include fruits or vegetables in every meal and snack. This is an easier way to get your 5 servings than counting and measuring.
- Choose 100% juice. A 4- to 6-ounce (118 to 177 ml) serving of 100% juice (about the size of a juice box) is a handy fruit serving.
- Trade up. Swap fruit or salad for a side of fries when eating out.
- Sneak 'em in. Add extra vegetables to foods you prepare from scratch or to prepared foods.
- Bribe 'em (the kids, that is). Allow kids to earn “vegetable bucks” or some other reward each time they purchase (and consume) a fruit or vegetable in the cafeteria.

Remember, you are the most important person for deciding what goes on the table and into lunches brought from home. Consistently offering fruits and vegetables is important in an age of intense fast-food marketing and advertising aimed at young people. For more information and great recipe and snack ideas, check out www.5aday.org.

Optional sidebar: If you like, you may include the following:

Fruits and Vegetables Make Easy Snacks

- Baby carrots and ranch dressing
- Peanut butter and apples or bananas
- 100% fruit juice (6 ounces, or 177 milliliters)
- Raisins or other dried fruits
- Cucumbers and cheese
- Grape tomatoes

E-mail message: Use this sample e-mail message to send *Planet Health* messages home to parents.

Subject: *Planet Health* Tips for Parents: Fruits and Vegetables . . . Try something new!

Dear Parents:

This month our class will use the *Planet Health* curriculum to explore the concepts of (insert curriculum goals here), using fruits and vegetables as a case study. Here are the key messages:

- Go for 5 or more—5 servings of fruits and vegetables combined each day.
- Try a new fruit or vegetable—chances are you'll like it!

You can support the goal of 5 a day by reinforcing the key messages at home and by following these *Planet Health* tips for parents:

- Be a good role model by serving and eating a variety of fruits and vegetables in various colors.
- Focus on deep green, orange, and red fruits and vegetables—they contain the most nutrients.
- Go for 5 or more servings each day by offering a fruit or vegetable at every meal or snack.
- Invite your children to choose and prepare a new recipe at home that features a fruit or vegetable they are not familiar with. This is a great opportunity to teach them practical cooking skills.

Want to learn more? For information on the health benefits of fruits and vegetables, go to www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/fruits.html. Go to www.5aday.com for fruit and vegetable recipes.