



## Healthy eating

### Curriculum links:

- **Science** Living things  
Environmental awareness and care
- **Geography** Human environments
- **SPHE** Myself and the wider world

### Lesson objectives:

To revise material covered in previous modules. To make students aware of the importance of a balanced diet, that includes sufficient fibre and water.

### Teacher guidelines

It is suggested that teachers ensure that students are familiar with the vocabulary and concepts introduced in the previous modules before starting this lesson.

### Keywords and concepts introduced in previous modules:

energy meals healthy food pyramid carbohydrates protein  
vitamins minerals calcium iron

We need food for energy. Nearly all the foods we eat are grown on the farm. Foods can be divided into groups. The food pyramid tells us how many portions from each food group we should eat every day. Potatoes and cereal products are carbohydrates, which are high in energy. Fruit and vegetables contain vitamins and minerals, which are good for our skin, hair and eyes. Dairy products contain calcium which help our teeth and bones to grow. Meat and eggs are proteins, which help us to grow. Meat also contains iron, which is good for our blood. We should only eat small amounts of foods that are high in sugar and salt or cooked in oil.

After revision of the above, teachers could discuss the more detailed information below.

### Keywords for this lesson:

balanced diet exercise sparingly fibre digestive system labels

### Remember: Clean hands, clean kitchen, clean food!

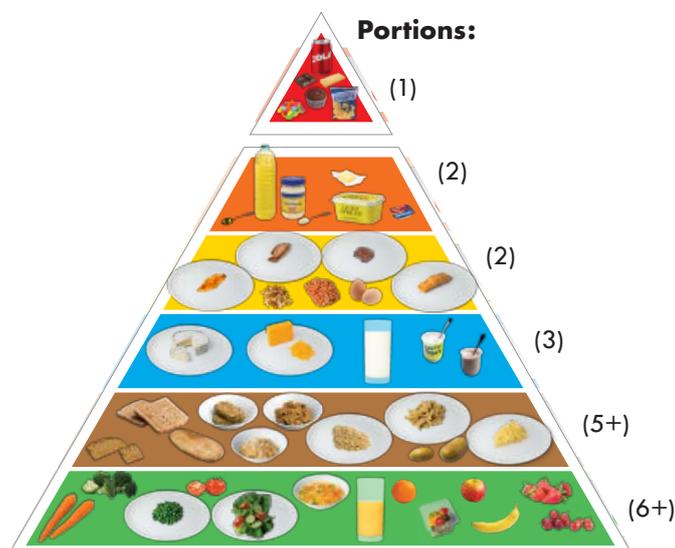
### The importance of food

We all need food for energy and it is important to have a **balanced diet**. Sometimes, if we really like a certain food, we may eat too much of it. Most people consume snacks high in fat, sugar and salt and sugar sweetened drinks up to six times a day. When we eat more of these unhealthy foods than our bodies need, it can cause damage to our bodies, which could affect us now or later on in life. In order to be healthy for life, we must **exercise** regularly and eat a balanced diet.

### The food pyramid

The shape of the Food Pyramid shows the types of foods and drinks people need to eat most for healthy eating. Each day, we should have

- Five-to-seven servings of vegetables, salad and fruit from the bottom shelf
- Three-to-five servings of carbohydrates. Wholemeal and wholegrain cereals are best
- Three servings of healthy dairy, increasing to five servings for children aged 9-12 and teenagers from 13-18
- Two servings of protein foods (meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts)
- Fats, spreads and oils in very small amounts, using as little as possible when cooking
- There are no recommended servings for top shelf foods. These foods are high in fat, sugar and salt and should only be eaten **sparingly**



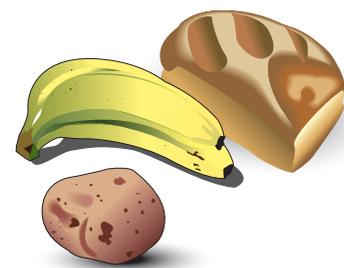
The food pyramid

## Fibre

**Fibre** is an important part of a healthy diet. It can help prevent heart disease, diabetes and weight gain, and can also improve digestive health, allowing food to pass through the body without any problems. Soluble fibre is a soft, sticky kind of fibre found in most fruit, vegetables, porridge and beans. Insoluble fibre is also called 'roughage' and typically found in wholegrain foods, cereals and foods with bran added. It is important to get a mixture of both types of fibre every day.

A person who eats a lot of fibre is less likely to snack on other foods. Foods with fibre in them are often bulky and therefore filling. We need 24-35g of fibre every day, however almost 80% of us do not eat enough fibre.

To include more fibre in our daily food intake, we can eat breakfast cereals that contain barley, wheat, or oats, eat wholegrain bread and eat more fruit and vegetables. We can also check the fibre content in the 'nutritional information' section of food **labels**.



## Drinks

In addition to fibre, we need water to keep our digestive systems healthy. Water controls the temperature (sweating) in our bodies and helps our blood to bring nutrients around the body. We lose water all the time, through going to the toilet and sweating. This water must be replaced by drinking water, fruit juices or milk and eating fruit and vegetables, which contain water. A person can live for about a month without food, but for only a week without water.



When choosing drinks, it is very important to make sure that they contain very little sugar. You can check the sugar content by reading the ingredients label of the drink. Ingredients are listed in descending order per the weight, i.e. the first ingredient listed is found in the greatest amount, while the last is found in the least amount.

### Suggested activities

- Photocopy the activity sheet on page 42
- As a class, design a food pyramid. Divide the class in five and give each group a different food group. Ask them to bring wrappers and packaging from home to illustrate the different groups
- Ask the students what they have eaten today and what shelves of the food pyramid this food comes from. Discuss the number of portions required for a balanced diet. The students should design a daily menu of their favourite meals following the guidelines of the food pyramid
- Discuss the importance of hygiene in food preparation. Encourage students to wash their hands before they eat their lunch
- Make a variety of posters labelled carbohydrate, protein, vitamins, minerals (iron, calcium). Write why each of these play an important role in our body's health. List the foods that are sources of each food group listed
- Ask the students to read the labels of breakfast cereals to discover which are highest in fibre and lowest in sugar
- In class, compare the ingredients list of a fizzy drink, a sweetened fruit juice and an unsweetened fruit juice. Remember that the ingredients are listed per the amount i.e. the first on the list is the biggest ingredient, the last is the smallest
- Discuss the interrelationship and interdependence between people, animals and plants and the fact that we rely on farming for food (See 'The Irish farmer', page 2)

### Learning outcomes:

At the end of this lesson, students should be aware of the importance of a balanced diet, that includes sufficient fibre and water.

### Additional resources

- [www.agriaware.ie](http://www.agriaware.ie)
- [www.incredibleedibles.ie](http://www.incredibleedibles.ie)
- [www.bestinseason.ie](http://www.bestinseason.ie)
- [www.potato.ie](http://www.potato.ie)

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**BORD BIA**  
IRISH FOOD BOARD



## Healthy eating

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1 The Food pyramid

**Did you know?**  
Nearly all of our food comes from the farm!

1. Fruit and vegetables are good source of vitamins and water. How many portions should we eat every day?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How often should we eat foods from the top shelf of the pyramid?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Dairy products are good for our bones and teeth. What mineral do they contain?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Protein helps us to grow. List three protein foods:

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Bread, rice and breakfast cereal are \_\_\_\_\_

They provide us with energy and contain fibre.

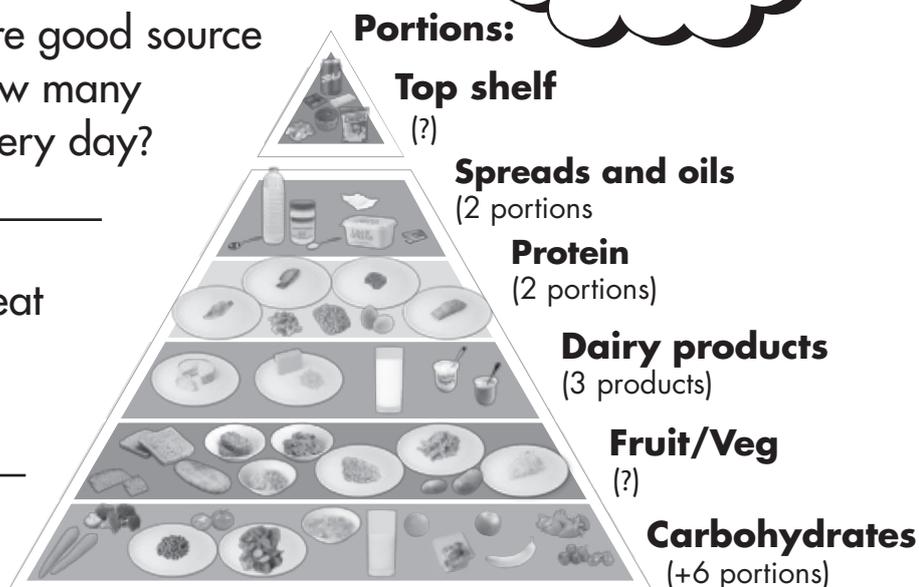
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6. What is a balanced diet and why is it important for humans?

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\* To be used with teacher guidelines, page 4