

Healthy Diets for a Healthy Life



OVERVIEW

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Participants will learn what a healthy diet is and how it benefits them.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Flipchart
- Different color markers, especially brown and colors that will represent a variety of foods
- Pre-prepared game cards
- A device that can be used as a timer






DURATION



KEY CONCEPTS

- Foods can be divided into three broad color groups: Rainbow, Brown, and White. A well-balanced diet contains food from all three groups on a regular basis.
- Young children and women especially need to eat a well-balanced diet.
- Our gardens can help us have healthy diets by providing a diversity of foods all year long.

TRAINING AGENDA

1	Introduction and warm-up	 DISCUSSION	10 min
2	What does a healthy diet look like?	 DISCUSSION	1 hour
3	Diets for young children and women	 DISCUSSION	45 min
4	How can my garden help me eat a healthy diet?	 DISCUSSION	20 min
5	Closing discussion	 DISCUSSION	10 min

1. Introduction and warm-up

Welcome gardeners to the training. Do a brief introduction to today's topic and review the training agenda. You may want to outline the training agenda on your flipchart or board so gardeners can see it when they arrive.

Conduct a warm-up exercise or ice-breaker to make sure all gardeners feel welcome and are ready to fully participate. Suggested warm-up and ice-breaker activities can be found in the Facilitator's Guide: Encouraging Learning through Participant Engagement.

2. What does a healthy diet look like?

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

GOAL OF DISCUSSION: Gardeners will see how a healthy diet contributes to good health and will learn to group foods according to color so they can easily prepare a healthy meal.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION: In advance, prepare 20–30 cards or slips of paper with the name of a common food item on each card. Make sure you have included a good mix of Rainbow, Brown, and White foods.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Flipchart
 - Different color markers, especially brown and colors that will represent a variety of foods
 - Pre-prepared game cards
 - A device that can be used as a timer
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1. Pair up gardeners and ask them to finish this sentence "A healthy diet is important because..." Encourage each pair to come up with as many ways to finish the sentence as they can in five minutes. After five minutes, have some pairs share what they discussed with the larger group.
2. Tell gardeners that a healthy diet is consistently eating **enough Rainbow, White, and Brown foods** and **not too many packaged, fatty, salty, or sugary foods**.
3. Introduce gardeners to the three Food Color Groups. Use the **Food Color Groups Training Aid** to show food items in each group. Demonstrate to gardeners the motions associated with each color group.
4. Put away the training aid and play the game with participants. Aim to complete the game in 15 minutes or less.
5. After the game, draw a large circle representing a plate on your flipchart or board. If it is not common in your area for an individual to eat from their own plate or bowl, draw circles to represent the serving bowls or a communal serving tray used at a meal. Have one volunteer shade the plate/serving bowls/serving tray with the appropriate colors or draw circles within it to represent the portion sizes of Rainbow, Brown, and White foods as they are typically consumed. Rainbow foods can be represented by two colors on top of one another. Ask the group if the drawings depict what is consumed in their households as well. This exercise can be repeated for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
6. Review what a healthy meal looks like (half Rainbow, one quarter Brown, and one quarter White foods) and discuss how this may differ from the meals that participants drew. Ask if any meals could be modified and discuss how.
7. Discuss with participants why packaged, fatty, salty, or sugary foods should be consumed in moderation.
8. Ask participants if they can think of any other characteristics of a healthy diet. Write their suggestions on your flipchart or board, adding any suggestions that they missed and discussing them as needed.

KEY MESSAGES

Healthy diets are the foundation of healthy bodies. If our bodies do not get enough to eat, then it is much easier for us to get sick, feel fatigue, be irritable or emotional, and not think clearly. It is important to eat enough food, but it is also important to get the right balance of nutrients from our diet. If we do not get all the nutrients we need from food, our bodies begin to slowly break down. We get sick a lot. Our hair, skin, and fingernails become brittle and break. We may lose our eyesight at night. We may feel fatigued. Our bodies work best when we have enough of the right kinds of foods.

Although it is easy to know if you are eating enough food (you are either hungry or not!), it is harder to know if you are eating the right balance of foods so your body stays well nourished. Assigning foods to a color group and then eating something from each color group at every meal is one way of making sure you are eating a balanced diet.

Assigning food to Food Color Groups is not a perfect system and there are many examples of individual foods that are difficult to classify correctly. Are bananas in the White group or Rainbow group? Are eggs Brown or White? It is ok if some food colors are a little misleading. The main goal of grouping food by color is to help people balance their meals over time. Each time we eat a healthy meal, we are building towards an overall healthy diet.

The three Food Color Groups

WHITE foods provide us energy. White foods include staple foods like rice, potatoes, maize, sweet potatoes, cassava, yams, and wheat. White foods are important because they provide our bodies with the fuel they use every day. In the discussion activity, White foods are associated with a running motion.

BROWN foods provide us with proteins that build our muscles. Brown foods include beans, eggs, chicken, fish, meat, pork, and milk. Brown foods are important because they allow us to build and maintain muscles. In the discussion activity, Brown foods are associated with making a muscle with your arms.

RAINBOW foods (reds, oranges, yellows, greens, blues, purples) provide our bodies with the nutrients they need to fight disease and help our organs (eyes, heart, lungs, liver, and brain) function properly. Rainbow foods include all vegetables and fruits such as tomatoes, spinach, kales, peppers, bananas, citruses, avocados, watermelon, and papaya. In the discussion activity, Rainbow foods are associated with pointing to your eyes and heart and breathing deeply.

WHITES



BROWNS



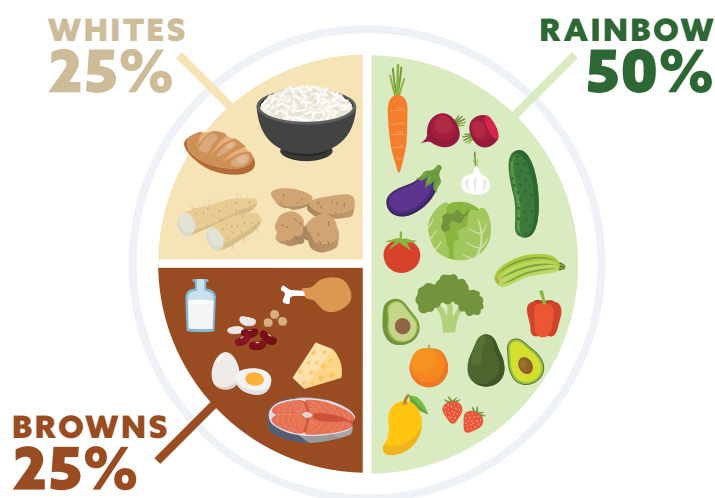
RAINBOW



A healthy diet includes...

...enough Rainbow, Brown, and White foods

- Every meal should contain one food from each color group.
- Rotate the foods you consume within each color group whenever possible. For example, if someone had papaya for their Rainbow food at breakfast, they can eat leafy greens for lunch and beets for dinner. It is not always possible to rotate what is eaten daily, however making a habit of eating a large diversity of foods will ensure you are consuming all the nutrients your body needs.
- Eat the right portion of each color at every meal. A healthy meal is one-quarter White foods, one-quarter Brown foods, and half Rainbow foods.



...and not too many packaged, fatty, salty, or sugary foods.

There are some foods that we should not to eat too frequently. These foods are known to cause problems in our bodies if they are consumed regularly or in large amounts. These foods may taste good and are rising in popularity, but they often do not contain the nutrients that we need to maintain a healthy body. They may also contain ingredients that can be bad for our bodies if we consistently eat a lot of it. Healthy diets do not include a lot of:

- Packaged foods, such as biscuits, noodles, or crisps
- Fatty foods, such as foods fried in oil
- Salty foods. Small amounts of salt are often not often harmful, but diets containing large amounts of salt can lead to health problems.
- Sugary foods and beverages

Additional tips

- Drink lots of clean water.
- Cook meats and fishes thoroughly and at a high temperature to reduce the risk of getting sick.
- Wash hands with soap and water before food preparation and before eating. Do not forget to wash children's hands too!



HOW TO

PLAY THE FOOD COLOR GROUPS GAME

Card preparation:

Aim to prepare about 20–30 cards in advance. Select healthy food items that are available in your area, such as local staples, beans, eggs, fish, vegetables, and fruits to include on the cards. Do not include packaged, fatty, salty, or sugary foods in the game. In the corner of each card, indicate the correct color group for each food item.

Game instructions:

Split up the group into two smaller groups. Have each group choose a team name to make it easier to keep track of the points on your flipchart or board as you go. The goal of the game is to help participants connect each food to 1) the correct color group, so that they can eat a properly balanced meal, and 2) the correct motion, so they understand what each food does in their bodies.

1. Split the group into two smaller groups. Have each team choose a name and write it on your flipchart or board to keep score.
2. The stack of cards is placed face down on a table, chair, or the ground in front of the two groups. Flip a coin to see which team will go first.
3. One person from the first team stands next to the cards. A timer is set for three minutes. This person will draw cards one at a time and must describe the food item listed on the card to their teammates until time is over. The person describing the food is NOT allowed to say either the name of the food or any reference to a color. When a teammate thinks they know what food is being described, they must do the motion associated with that food so that the person in front knows to call on them (for example, if the teammate thinks the person in front is describing rice, they will make a running motion until they are called on). They can only guess the food being described after the person in front calls on them. If they guess correctly, their team gets one point.
4. If the teammate guesses incorrectly, the other team has a chance to “steal” the point and guess the food item. If the opposing team guesses correctly, they are awarded the point instead. The teams keep guessing back and forth until one gets it right, but must stop once time is over.
5. The person describing the food should try to go through as many cards as possible during their turn to gain the most points. Tally the points for each team when time is over.
6. The next team now chooses a person to come to the front. Cards that have already been used are put away, and the timer is reset to three minutes. Now the opposing team must guess first. If they guess incorrectly, the first team may “steal” the point by correctly guessing the food item.
7. Continue to switch teams until all the cards are used up.

0 POINTS: The card is forfeited if the person accidentally says the name or color of the food and no points are awarded.

1 POINT: If someone on the team does the correct motion and correctly guesses the name of the food listed.

1 POINT: If one team does not guess correctly the first time, the other team may take a turn at guessing the food listed on the card.

3. Diets for young children and women

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

GOAL OF DISCUSSION: Gardeners will discuss how children and women can eat healthier diets and why this is important.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Flipchart and markers

1. Explain to gardeners that healthy diets are important for everyone, but there are certain phases of life where it is especially important for your body to be well nourished. Just like when plants need more food and water when they are rapidly growing, humans also need more nourishment when they are growing. This is especially true for children under two years old and pregnant and breastfeeding women.
2. Label your flipchart paper or board "Foods Eaten by Children under Two" and make three columns for Rainbow, Brown, and White foods. Ask participants to name foods commonly consumed by young children in the community and have them say under which column the food should be listed. If participants name dishes that contain multiple ingredients, write the primary ingredients of the dish down in the correct columns.
3. Ask gardeners to reflect on the typical diets of children under two in their area. Is it well balanced between the three Food Color Groups? What colors are missing? Are there seasons or times of the year where children's diets are less diverse? Do all children in a household eat this diet or do some children eat a more diverse diet than others?
4. With gardeners, brainstorm ways that all children can eat a more nutritious diet. Do certain foods need to be grown during the dry season to supplement diets? Do children need to be given more access to the nutritious foods that are already around the household? Can nutritious foods be prepared in a way that young children can eat them? Write these ideas down on your flipchart or board.
5. Label your flipchart paper or board "Healthy Foods for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women" and make three columns for Rainbow, Brown, and White foods. Ask participants to suggest foods that are good for women to eat during this phase of their lives and have them say under which column the food should be listed.
6. Ask gardeners why some pregnant or breastfeeding women may not eat enough of these foods. List these reasons on the left side of your flipchart or board. With participants, brainstorm potential solutions to each barrier and write ideas to the right of each reason.

KEY MESSAGES

When plants are rapidly growing (building more roots, becoming taller and bushier, developing flowers or fruits), they need lots of water and nutrients so their growth is not stunted. This is also true for humans. When our bodies are busy (growing, healing from sickness, pregnant or lactating), we need nourishing food to help our bodies do this work. Nourishing food is always important, but there are two phases of life where it is especially important to be well nourished: when child is under two years old and when a woman is pregnant or breastfeeding.

Children under six months

If children are younger than six months, it is recommended that they only consume breastmilk. Breastmilk is very nutritious and contains all the nutrients and fluids that a child needs. Babies should be breastfed whenever they express hunger to make sure they are consuming enough food. Because they have small stomachs and digest milk very quickly, babies will breastfeed many times a day.

Children over six months

Although children over six months may continue to breastfeed, it is important that solid foods also be introduced around this time. Children's bodies continue to grow during this time and breastmilk does not contain all the nutrients little bodies need after the first six months of life. As children transition away from breastmilk, their diet should begin to resemble an adult's diet with all three Food Color Groups consumed.

Since children do not eat large amounts of food, it is even more important that the foods they eat are packed with nutrients. Rainbow and Brown foods are all highly nutritious. It is important to offer children little bits of these nutritious foods whenever possible—even if adults consider the flavors “too strong” for young children—so that children grow accustomed to eating them. A child may gravitate towards sweet or bland flavored foods, but if a child is offered strong-flavored, nutritious foods, like vegetables, repeatedly then they will develop a taste for them.

Modifying foods for children over six months

Starting at six months, children should be introduced to solid foods. Even without teeth, children can use their strong gums to chew foods. Foods should be modified however so that they are not a choking hazard.

- Vegetables can be boiled until they are soft and then mashed
- Beans can be boiled until they are soft and then mashed
- Small dried fish can be pounded and incorporated into stews or porridges
- Fruits can be cut into spears so that young children can hold them comfortably in their hand

Pregnant and breastfeeding women

When women are pregnant and breastfeeding, they should consume more food than normal and be extra careful to consume a good mix of all three Food Color Groups. Pregnancy and lactation require women's bodies to do a lot of work. As babies develop, they use nutrients from the woman's body that need to be replaced from the woman's diet.

Pregnant and breastfeeding women should eat when their bodies tell them that they are hungry. Rainbow and Brown foods will help women maintain their health while they are pregnant and will help their babies develop properly. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should also drink lots of water. Pregnant women need extra water because their bodies are making more blood and amniotic fluid. Breastfeeding women need extra water to produce milk.

20 min

4. How can my garden help me eat a healthy diet?

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

GOAL OF DISCUSSION: Gardeners will discuss how gardening can contribute to eating a healthy diet within their households.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Flipchart and markers

1. Ask participants if anyone has a story to share of how their garden, or perhaps a neighbor's or family member's garden, was helpful in eating the three Food Color Groups more frequently.
2. Brainstorm with gardeners ways that their gardens can produce vegetables and fruits all year long to contribute to a healthy diet.

KEY MESSAGES

- Vegetables can be planted in a staggered manner to extend the harvest and prevent an over-supply of vegetables that could perish.
- Fruit trees and perennials can be planted on the edges of gardens or around the property to provide fruits at different times of the year.
- Container or sack gardens can be planted during the off-season and watered with household wastewater.

10 min

Closing discussion

Going around in a circle, ask each participant to share one thing they learned with the group.

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE: Cooking Demonstrations to Encourage Healthy Eating



Cooking demonstrations require some advance planning and coordination, but can be a rewarding way to finish a training program or re-engage participants in the training material. Cooking demonstrations should be relaxed events with a festive attitude where participants can learn by doing and then stay to enjoy a delicious meal with their fellow cooks.

Goals of a cooking demonstration

Cooking demonstrations have a variety of goals:

1. Demonstrate how to incorporate locally available vegetables into meals in new and exciting ways
2. Demonstrate how to cook a well-balanced, nutritious meal
3. Provide participants with a relaxing and fun way to build relationships with their fellow group members

Preparing for a cooking demonstration

It is helpful to include participants in the organization of the event. Set aside time at the end of a training session to choose the time and location for the event and assign tasks in an equitable manner. You may need multiple planning sessions for the discussion.

There are many tasks that can be assigned to participants so that the event goes smoothly:

- Recipe preparation (see below)
- Food preparation – vegetables will need to be washed and chopped, potatoes peeled, or beans sifted through!
- Cooking – choose volunteer cooks who are comfortable and excited by the prospect of cooking for a large group of people
- Setting up chairs and tables
- Serving food
- Washing plates, bowls, pots, cooking implements, and utensils after eating
- Sweeping or cleaning up trash from the site

Many items will need to be organized in advance:

- A flipchart or board where you can write the recipes out for all to see and copy
- Sometimes multiple cooking stations are needed to prepare enough food for the group – there should be enough pots, pans, lids, spatulas, cooking fuel, etc. for each station
- Ingredients for cooking, including oil, cooking water, salt, and other spices
- Bowls or plates for everyone
- Utensils for everyone
- Rags or napkins for cleaning up
- Hand washing stations
- Refreshments to complement the meal (avoid sugary drinks)
- Fresh fruits to complement the meal
- Tables to cook on or display the finished dishes
- Chairs for everyone
- Music or entertainment for when participants are eating
- Shade or indoor space for eating

Choosing what to cook during a cooking demonstration

Cooking demonstrations can feature either a single recipe or multiple recipes at a time. Engage participants in the selection of the recipes but collaborate with the recipe developers and cooks to make sure recipes include all three Food Color Groups, use vegetables appropriately, and can be cooked by participants at home.

- Brainstorm with participants a list of vegetables that they would be excited to learn how to cook or see new ways to cook.
- Ask participants if there are any traditional staple foods in their area that are not milled or processed that they want to use instead of heavily milled or processed staple foods.
- Ask participants if there are dishes they already know about and want to learn how to cook.
- Consider giving participants the challenge of preparing a nutritious meal that meets a budget set by participants (for example, the price of a meal could be lower than what someone would spend if they purchased a quick street meal). The meal should have all three Food Color Groups represented, and all ingredients should be purchased from local markets or collected from local gardens. Calculate the price of the meal by dividing the total amount spent on food by the number of people who eat the meal. The price should meet the budget set by participants.

Regardless of the recipes selected, be sure to:

- Use only locally available cooking implements (spatulas and pots) and sources of heat (stoves or fires).
- Find out what staples (White foods) and proteins (Brown foods) are most widely consumed by participants and find recipes that can improve the nutritional content of dishes that use these foods as the base. Consider replacing heavily milled staples, such as white rice, noodles, or maize meal, with staple foods that are less processed, such as brown rice, millet, or sorghum.
- Do not use expensive ingredients that participants do not purchase regularly for household consumption. Although participants may want to eat special foods at the cooking demonstration, it is unlikely that they will be able to replicate these dishes often in their homes.
- Fruits are often not cooked as part of a recipe, but are part of a healthy meal when consumed on the side. Include a fruit as a side dish whenever possible.
- Feature recipes that do not cook vegetables for more than 5–10 minutes. In most recipes, vegetables can be added as the last step and cooked until they are just soft. Cooking heat can destroy many valuable vitamins and may make vegetables taste bitter, so it is best to limit their exposure to heat.
- Do not throw out cooking water once vegetables have been added. Many nutrients will leach from vegetables into the water, so add just enough water to cook vegetables and not throw any away.
- Feature recipes that use a minimal amount of oil, salt, and sugar and do not rely on packaged foods, such as instant noodles.

Day of the event

- Be sure to allow yourself plenty of time at the start of the day to organize the materials needed for the demonstration.
- Set up the food preparation stations and cooking stations so that large groups can gather around them and many people can participate if needed. This might mean stations need to be slightly far away from each other.
- When food is being cooked, make sure someone is explaining what is happening and that everyone can see what is happening. It might be necessary to have people take turns coming close to the pots and pans so they can see inside.
- Small samples can be passed around in bowls if it is helpful for participants to see what the cooked food looks like when it is time to take it off the heat, add more water, add the sauce, etc.
- Food should be served by different people than the cooks to allow the cooks to rest and clean their hands before eating. Food should be served so that everyone can start eating at the same time.
- Allow children to join whenever possible. Although children may provide some distractions for participants during the demonstration, participants will see their children enjoying the prepared foods and this will further build their confidence that they can successfully prepare these foods at home to feed their family. Be sure to prepare enough food so that everyone, including children, is served a sufficient portion.

Discussion points to raise with participants

Finish the event by asking participants to share their reflections. Encourage them to discuss variations they would make to the cooking process, ingredients they would add or omit, and how the dish could be adapted to seasonal shortages of any of the ingredients.