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# BASIC NUTRITION: GUIDELINES FOR BALANCED MEALS AND SPECIAL DIETS

## LESSON PLAN

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### Lesson overview

*Time: One hour*

This lesson covers the basics of good nutrition, recommendations for a balanced diet, and special diets as they might be used in a facility that cares for the elderly and disabled. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) sets nutrition standards, and the balanced diet recommendations are from the USDA Food Pyramid.

### Learning goals

At the end of this session, the learner will:

1. Be able to relate the basic elements of good nutrition and why they are important.
2. Understand what makes up a balanced diet, including foods and portion sizes.
3. Be familiar with common special diets and how to prepare them.
4. Be able to state important factors in food safety and service.

### Teaching plan

*Give each learner a copy of the corresponding learning guide.*

*For self-study, give the learner the entire packet except for the test answer sheet and certificate. Upon completion of the test the learner may receive the certificate if the test has been completed adequately.*

### Introduction:

1. Ask your learners, "Have any of you ever been on a diet?" Encourage some to talk about the types of diets they have tried and the results they obtained.
2. Explain the content in the lesson overview and list the learning goals on a board if available.

### Section 1: Basic Elements of Good Nutrition

1. State: "You are what you eat." Using the learning guide, deliver a mini-lecture on the three elements of good nutrition. Emphasize that water is the most important element in the body.
2. Ask different learners to use the learning guide and teach the group about one of the five nutrients.

### Section 2: The balanced diet

1. Use the picture of the USDA Food Pyramid to illustrate the content in the learner guide. Point to each food picture and ask the learners to tell you how many servings of each one are needed every day.
2. Explain that the sixth group, fats, oils, and sweets, contains fat that is necessary in limited amounts only. Too much fat can be harmful, and most Americans obtain sufficient quantities in the other foods we eat.
3. Emphasize that calorie needs vary by size, weight, age, and activity. A small female should use the smaller number of recommended servings.
4. Discuss the serving size examples listed in the learning guide. Point out that most fast food hamburgers contain at least 4 oz. of meat, so that a small person who needs only 2 two-ounce servings of meat a day will receive the entire allotment with one hamburger.
5. Emphasize that elderly people have the same needs for nutrients, water, and fiber but have a decreased sense of taste. Everything they eat should have good nutrient value.
6. If time allows, ask the learners to use the balanced diet and serving sizes to write a one-day meal plan using foods they like. Discuss.

### Section 3: Special diets

Review the six types of special diets in the learning guide, and add others that you use.

### Section 4: Food safety and serving tips

Discuss the content in food safety and serving tips and allow time for questions.

### Conclusion

1. Have the learners complete the test. Use the answer sheet to grade the test in class.
2. Be sure the learners sign the achievement certificate and your sign-in sheet.

**BASIC NUTRITION: GUIDELINES FOR BALANCED MEALS AND SPECIAL DIETS**  
**LEARNING GUIDE**

<p><b>BASIC ELEMENTS OF GOOD NUTRITION</b>  Everybody needs these in the right amounts.</p>	<p align="center"><b>THE BALANCED DIET</b></p> <p>We all need balanced intake from five groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Breads, cereals, rice, pasta (6–11 servings)</li> <li>2. Vegetables (3–5 servings)</li> <li>3. Fruits (2–4 servings)</li> <li>4. Meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, nuts (2–3 servings)</li> <li>5. Milk, yogurt, cheese (2–3 servings)</li> </ol> <p align="center">AND</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. <u>Limited</u> intake of fats, oils, and sweets</li> </ol> <p>Using a variety of different foods within these groups ensures balance and good nutrition.</p> <p align="center"><b>What's a Serving?</b></p> <p>1 serving of breads, cereals, rice, pasta =  1 slice bread or 1 tortilla  ½ cup cooked rice or pasta  1 oz. cereal</p> <p>1 serving of vegetables =  1 cup leafy vegetables (salad)  10 french fries  ½ cup cooked vegetables</p> <p>1 serving of fruit =  ½ cup canned fruit  1 apple, orange, or banana  ¾ cup fruit juice</p> <p>1 serving of meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs =  2–3 oz. meat, poultry, fish  ½ cup dry beans or peas  2 tablespoons peanut butter  1 egg</p> <p>1 serving of milk, yogurt, cheese =  1 cup milk  8 oz. yogurt  1.5 oz. cheddar cheese</p>
<p align="center"><b>NUTRIENTS</b></p> <p>Elements of food used by the body for energy, maintenance, healing, and growth</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Proteins:</b> for growth of muscle and body tissue  <b>Sources:</b> meat, fish, eggs, milk, peas, beans, nuts</li> <li>2. <b>Carbohydrates:</b> for energy  <b>Sources:</b> bread, grains, cereals, potatoes, peas, beans</li> <li>3. <b>Fats:</b> for warmth, vitamin storage, and energy  <b>Sources:</b> meat, dairy products, vegetable oils, egg yolks</li> <li>4. <b>Vitamins:</b> for healthy functioning of body systems  <b>Sources:</b> fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy products</li> <li>5. <b>Minerals:</b> for growth, strength, and healthy blood, bones, and body system functions  <b>Sources:</b> fruit, vegetables, meat, fish, dairy products, grains</li> </ol>	
<p align="center"><b>FIBER</b></p> <p>Important for digestion and waste elimination.  Sources: cereals, grains, fruits, vegetables</p>	
<p align="center"><b>FLUIDS</b></p> <p>Body weight = 2/3 water  Daily need = 80 oz. fluid intake (8–10 glasses)  Fluid intake should equal fluid output  Too much water loss = Dehydration  Not enough water loss = Edema  Urine = 40% of fluid output  Evaporation = 60% of fluid output</p>	
<p align="center">Food fact: Calories are the amount of energy in food. Calorie need varies by size, weight, age, and activity.</p>	

Body metabolism slows as we age, so the elderly require fewer calories. However, **the need for water, fiber, and all nutrients remains the same in older people**—so eating healthy food is more important!

### Special diets

Many people have special dietary needs because of illness, surgery, or ongoing conditions. Be sure that you know the type of diet every resident in your facility is supposed to be eating. Mistakes on special diets can have serious results and cause many problems for the resident.

### Low salt

Also called restricted sodium or low NA (the chemical abbreviation for salt or sodium). Many people with heart or kidney disease or high blood pressure must eat this way.

Guidelines:

1. Little or no salt is used in preparing food.
2. No salt should be added by the resident.
3. Salty snacks are not allowed (e.g., potato chips, pretzels).
4. Condiments that contain salt may be prohibited (catsup, mustard, margarine).

### Low fat (also low cholesterol)

Often recommended for people with heart disease or obesity.

Guidelines:

1. Eat low fat foods like chicken, vegetables, fruits, pasta, and cereal.
2. Do not eat fatty foods like ice cream, egg yolks, bacon, and sausage (or eat in very small amounts rarely).

### Soft

This diet helps people who have difficulty chewing or suffer from certain kinds of stomach trouble.

Guideline:

1. Eat cooked vegetables, ground meat, fish, and pureed foods.

### Diabetic—follow the plan!

It is important for people with diabetes to eat the right foods, whether or not they are taking insulin or other medicine to control their diabetes. A diabetic resident should have a diet plan designed especially for him or her by a doctor or nutritionist. It will specify certain amounts of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats.

### High protein

A resident who has just had surgery or who has a wound often needs high protein to speed healing.

- To get protein, eat lots of meat, fish, eggs, beans, peas, and dairy products

### Liquid diets

1. Full liquid includes all liquids, such as strained soups, milk, and ice cream.
2. Clear liquid includes only liquids you can see through, such as water, tea, apple juice, clear broth, and black coffee (no cream or milk).

### Food safety

To avoid food poisoning:

- Never undercook meat—cook until meat temperature is 165 degrees to kill the bacteria
- Refrigerated foods must be kept below 45 degrees
- Thaw frozen foods quickly and cook them before they reach room temp.
- Foods that will spoil at room temperature should be prepared last
- Keep fresh foods separate from each other and use different surfaces and utensils when preparing each one
- Cover unserved portions to prevent contamination
- Cool leftovers quickly, refrigerate in small containers

**Taste tip:** Elderly people have a decreased sense of taste, and often their stomachs can't handle spicy foods. Fresh, tasty foods with creative seasoning will help them get the nutrients they need.

### Serving tips

- If a resident has impaired vision, identify the foods on his plate by using the clock face: "Your pork chop is at 3 o'clock, your mashed potatoes are at 6 o'clock, and your pudding is in a separate dish above the plate at 12 o'clock."
- When feeding a resident, identify the foods and ask the resident what food he wants next. Offer seasonings if allowed. Offer liquids often, using a different straw for each liquid. Allow hot liquids to cool. Offer one bite at a time, using a spoon two-thirds full.
- **Serve hot foods hot and cold foods cold!**

# THE FOOD GUIDE PYRAMID

At the bottom of the Pyramid, are the foods you need the most in your diet. As you go up the Pyramid, you need less.

