



What is your portion size?

TOOL KIT

Activities and Resources to Use in the Classroom

This “tool kit” is designed for classroom teachers and school nurses as well as program leaders in community organizations, in teaching the importance of good health and nutritious eating through portion control. The Missouri Model School Wellness Policy indicates that schools are required to 1) promote balanced dietary patterns and physical activity to prevent becoming overweight or obesity and 2) provide discussion of serious and chronic medical conditions that are associated with being overweight. In these materials, you will find information that will support those requirements.

Other programmatic requirements of the Missouri Model School Wellness Policy represented by these activities include:

- 1. Use of multimedia sources that engage students.*
- 2. Capacity to be integrated into the core curriculum at the elementary level.*
- 3. Sustainability and availability as a resource.*
- 4. Addressing students' academic success as well as health concerns.*
- 5. Providing links between school and home to promote active lifestyles.*
- 6. Creating an obesity prevention program that includes K-5 sequential wellness education.*

Why Portion Control?

In the United States, obesity has become one of the nation’s most critical public health challenges. An alarming number of children are overweight or obese, causing a rise in related health problems (see information sheet entitled So What’s the Big Deal?). An important strategy for helping our children and youth maintain a healthy weight is portion control – building awareness about how our portion sizes have grown over time and how we can make better choices about how much we eat. Eating healthy portion sizes allows us to eat our favorite foods and still maintain a healthy weight. Staying aware of what is entering your body is more than half the battle of staying fit and healthy.

EAT SMALL is a project of Maternal and Child Health Coalition's Weighing In collaborative, a community effort to help Kansas City's children and youth maintain a healthy weight. The EAT SMALL campaign is funded by the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City and is designed to build awareness in children age 8- 12 years about the importance of portion control and to provide helpful tips on how to eat more nutritiously.

Within this educational packet you will find suggestions for creative, easy-to-use activities for use in the school setting. Whether you are a classroom teacher, a school nurse, or a program director, these ideas can be adapted to your situation. Pick and choose according to the age of your children, your setting, the time you have available and the resources you have at hand. You will also find links to web sites that have additional information and resources, as well as interactive games and activities.

Two of the Eat Small pages (So What's the Big Deal and Tips for Parents) may be useful to send home to parents, handing out in PTA meetings, placing on the school district's web site or printing in the parent newsletter. We have created them in Spanish for use by Spanish-speaking parents. Some of the other materials are available in Spanish, so check the suggested web sites if you need Spanish language materials. The enclosed CD provides copies of all suggested handouts.

Involve The Kids!

Prepare healthy snacks

(Begin with determining healthy portions! For instance, one cup of yogurt is a portion. One portion of peanut butter is 2 tablespoons. Have children do the detective work in order to recognize portion sizes.)

- Make your own peanut butter*; then spread one tablespoon on whole grain crackers, bananas, or apples. *Pour 1/4 cup peanut or corn oil into a blender or food processor, then add 2 cups of roasted peanuts. Process the oil and nuts, adding small amounts of oil gradually until smooth. A small amount of salt or sugar can be added to taste.***
- Make your own snack mix with nuts, dried fruit, dry cereal, raisins, mini pretzels, popcorn, etc.) and determine a healthy portion.***
- Plan a holiday party with healthy snacks and determine portion size.***
- Have students declare their favorite healthy snack. Measure healthy portion sizes of those snacks and share with the class.***
- Divide the students into small groups and ask them to design their own smoothie* with fresh fruit, ice, juice or low-fat milk. See if the food service staff will help by providing blenders and utensils.***
- Divide the students into small groups and ask them to design their own milk shake* with milk, low-fat ice cream or frozen yogurt, fruit or other flavorings.***
- Have students create their own yogurt parfait by layering nonfat yogurt, fresh fruit, trail mix, granola or cereal in a clear plastic cup.***

- ❑ **Make your own fruit and cheese kabobs. Cut up fruit and cheese into bite sizes and spear with chopsticks, toothpicks, or stick pretzels.**
- ❑ **Make a healthy dip* with low-fat sour cream and vegetables. Cut up vegetables such as carrots, celery, and broccoli for dipping. Try more exotic veggies!**

***See Sampling of Healthy Recipes for the Classroom for these easy recipes.**

Label Reading Fun!

Ask the children to bring in a package of their favorite food with the nutrition fact label. As the teacher, bring in a variety of labels for the classroom. Talk about what the information means (see handout “What’s on the Label?”). Remember that the nutrition label is based on a set serving size that may be different from the portion you eat. Divide the children into groups and have them plan which foods they would serve for breakfast, lunch and dinner in one day. Have them add up the fat grams a person would consume in a day on this plan, using the serving sizes on the label. (The American Heart Association says that, in general, children need about 2,200 calories a day, and that no more than 30% of the calories should come from fats, approximately 73 fat grams per day. They can also use other measures to determine the healthiness of the meal plan (total calories, nutrients, etc.) If any of the food labels are for low-fat or “lite”, talk about the fact that you still need to be careful of portion sizes. Just because it’s low-fat, doesn’t mean you can eat more of it!

Using the handout entitled “What’s on the Label?” ask the students to compare the labels of the dairy foods. First look at the serving size of each and discuss how they are alike and different. How many calories are in each serving size? Which are highest? Lowest? Why? (fat and sugar content) Compare the calcium content of each. Have the students fill out the worksheet entitled “What’s the Score?” Have a blind taste test, allowing students to have a taste of several of the dairy products on the list. See if they can tell the difference between the products.

Make the exercise into a math lesson by having them add the grams or milligrams, figure the percentages recommended for daily consumption, and compare their figures in order to learn about which products are healthiest.

Measuring Center

Set up a measuring center that represents the basic food groups. Have children measure foods into paper plates, bowls and cups using measuring cups and spoons. Have them try to visualize portions, using handout entitled “Portion Sizes Are in Your Hand.” Ask them what other common objects could be used to help visualize the healthy portions. For instance, a computer mouse is about the size for a medium baked potato. Once you’ve figured healthy portions, enjoy a snack!

Make this into a math lesson by figuring how many teaspoons are in a tablespoon, how many cups in a pint, quart, etc.

Portion Distortion

Using the CD in your packet, show the slides in Portion Distortion I or II. (You can also find these slides at <http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/portion/>.) Have the children answer the questions on the quiz and use them to talk about healthy portions of the food they eat. Make this into a language arts exercise by asking the children to write a story about portions out of control.

Crosswords and other Puzzles

Create a crossword or other puzzle on line that is customized to the lesson of the day. Go to one of these web sites to see how to create one of these with your students. Divide them into small groups and have them make their own puzzle given the words and phrases from the portion control lessons. Check out: www.puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com, www.varietygames.com or www.internet4classrooms.com/excel_puzzle.htm.

This is a great language arts activity!

MyPyramid

Display a picture or poster of the new food pyramid – see www.MyPyramid.com. Discuss the pyramid with them, using the information on the web site to add to your understanding, if needed. Have the students use the MyPyramid worksheet to keep track of a day's worth of eating to see how close they come to the recommendations. Also encourage the students to analyze the choices available in school lunches with MyPyramid. Use the handouts entitled MyPyramid for Kids and MyPyramid Worksheet.

Let's Talk About It!

Distribute handout entitled "Portion Sizes in the Classroom" on portion sizes. Ask the children to share what their favorite snack foods are. Have visual aids (tennis ball, ping pong ball, etc.) on hand to show what a portion size is for various foods, and ask them to identify what is a healthy portion size for their favorite foods. Use several foods commonly eaten by children to show smaller portions. Lead the discussion in the direction of why controlling the portions we eat leads to good health. Discuss ideas on how to control the portion sizes they eat – take food out of a bag and put into a bowl rather than eat straight out of a bag, split with a friend, etc.) Tell why it's hard to eat smaller portions of your favorite foods.

Bring into the classroom several food sections or grocery store ads from the newspaper. Have the children identify the foods they think are the healthiest. Why do they think those foods are healthy? Talk about that even if the food we eat is healthy, we still need to control the portions we eat. Optional activity: Divide the children into groups and have them study the ads/recipes to plan a healthy meal. Have them discuss what portions of each food would be a healthy amount. Make a shopping list of the foods they would need to buy to make their meal. They could figure the cost of the meal from the grocery store ad.

Divide the students into small groups to design a Food Network show on healthy size portions. How would they tell their audience about what are smaller portions of the food we eat? What would the name of the show be? Who would star? (Good language arts activity!)

Ask the children to bring in an ad from a magazine or newspaper that shows their favorite food item. Students can take turns showing their ad and telling why it's their favorite food, whether it's a good choice, why they like it, and what a portion size would be.

Ask the children to track in a notebook what snacks they have eaten over the last three days. They should make notes not only about what they've eaten but how much. Ask them to comment about how healthful each choice was and why. Ask them to reflect on the portion size – too much, just about right? How did they know that?

Surfing for Info!

Ask students to do Internet research on topics such as:

- Upcoming changes on food nutrition labels**
- What portion sizes were in earlier years compared to 2006 (i.e., a bottle of Coke in 1916 vs. 2006, a Hershey chocolate bar in 1908 vs. 2006, McDonalds' French fries in 1955 vs. 2006)**
- What the recommended portion size is for (pasta, bagels, etc.)**
- How many portions are there in a 12 inch submarine sandwich?**

Language arts activity: Have students write a story about portion sizes years ago versus today.

See Resource List for links to web sites packed with nutrition information.

On-Line Fun!

Have the students check out some of the web sites listed in the Resource Section for interactive games focusing on healthy eating.

Handouts (on enclosed CD and online)

Serving Sizes Are in Your Hand (revised from www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/NC_portions.html)

What's in a Serving Size (revised from www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/NC_portions.html)

Serving Sizes in the Classroom (revised from www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/NC_portions.html)

Food to Grow On (www.midwestdairy.com)

MyPyramid Worksheet (www.mypyramid.gov)

MyPyramid for Kids (see above)

What's on the Label (see above)

What's the Score (see above)