

LESSON 7. The Foods We Eat: Towards a Balanced Diet

Grade Level: 7-9

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2. Overview We eat food everyday because it is important to our body. There are different types of food. Each type of food performs specific functions in our body. To stay healthy, we are advised to eat food which contains a combination of many types. Some food can give us energy while others can make us grow. A combination of essential foods is called a balanced diet. It is generally believed that you are what you eat.

3. Purpose The purpose of this lesson is to draw attention to what makes a balanced diet. The different food items, their sources and content will be discussed. Local food items which contain the essential things which make up a balanced diet will be discussed.

4. Objectives Students will be able to:

- i. List at least 10 different food items taken in their community
- ii. Identify what each food item contains
- iii. Make a list of different food items which eaten can constitute a balanced diet.

5. Resources/materials Uncooked food items are things students can be asked to bring as samples to the class.

- Grain such as maize, beans
- Small quantities of local cooking oil
- Some local fruits in season
- The class teacher can augment with special food items.

It is important that cooked food items as much as possible be avoided as these rot easily and are difficult to keep. The food items could be placed on a table in the Science Corner of the classroom.

- Simple laboratory chemicals and simple glassware for testing food items.

6. Activities and Procedures We eat a variety of foods to satisfy our needs. It is important that we eat the right amount of each type of food. The local food items and the prevalent eating habits of the community should be the launch pad for this lesson.

What are the common food items? The students should be asked to make a comprehensive list of local food items.

The food people generally eat may not be what they need. The food we need are usually determined by what part the food items play in our body. For a healthy body, the following types of food are necessary:

- Food for energy known as CARBOHYDRATES such as grains along with FATS and OILS such as vegetable oils
- Body building food known as PROTEIN such as meat, fish, milk
- Health preserving food known as VITAMINS and MINERALS such as fruits
- Water
- Roughage such as vegetables

Here is a simple Poem which the students can learn about the different types of food.

Fish, meat, beans and eggs
I need you for body repair.
Yams, rice and other grains
Give the strength I need for work

The concept of a BALANCED DIET can then be introduced. People usually talk of having a balanced diet. What this means should here be explained. In the first place, diet is what a person eats each day. Balanced diet means eating the right kind of food in the right quantities. Eating the right kind of food could now be easily determined from what we know of food items. But to determine the right quantities of food to eat is not easy. This is a good point for discussion. To get round the problem, it is possible to find out what people who are not healthy eat and compare this with what they actually need. The state of health of a person could be linked to the type of food the person usually takes.

Knowing what each food item contains can be obtained through simple chemical tests-testing for the presence of carbohydrates for instance. The teacher should look out for simple, inexpensive drop tests for food items. Biology books contain such information.

7. Tying it all together This lesson on the foods we eat gives an opportunity for the students to actually do things. The students will contribute to the lesson with materials from home. They could be involved in discussion about eating habits in their community. Out of the discussion, the students themselves may come up with their balanced diet using what food items are available in their community.

8. Assessment This lesson should provide opportunity for self examination-what individual family members eat and their state of health. An assessment of the eating habits of the community could be assessed-do people eat what they need or just what

is available. Is there any room for the local meals to be supplemented in order to have balanced diet for all?

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