

SCOOPING UP FRUITS AND VEGGIES

Topic: the importance of healthy food choices and a balanced diet

In this activity, students will learn the importance of including plenty of fruits and vegetables in their diets.

Materials:

5 of one type of small item (e.g., beanbags, foam balls, yarn balls) per group of 4–5 students (These will represent fruits and vegetables.)

5 of a second type of small item per group of 4–5 students (These will represent not-so-healthy foods.)

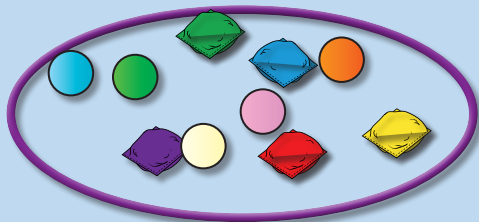
1 Hula-Hoop toy per group of 4–5 students

whistle or other signal

whiteboard or chart paper (optional)

Setup:

Spread the hoops around the play space (e.g., gymnasium, playground, or grassy field) at equal distances from each other. Scatter one set of fruits and vegetables and one set of not-so-healthy foods inside each hoop.



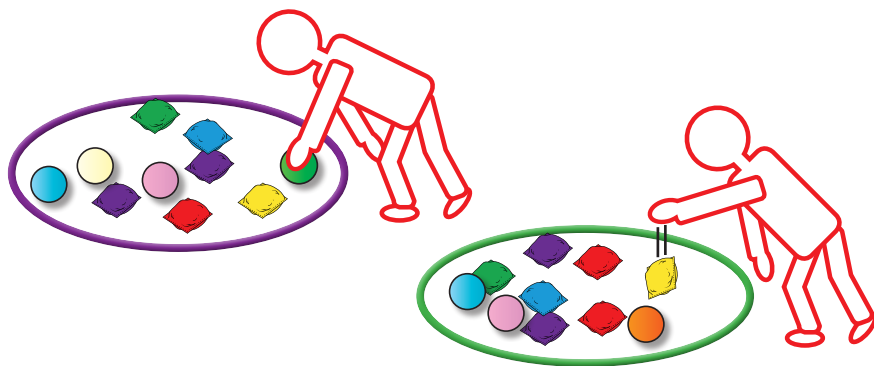
STEPS:

1. With students, brainstorm a list of fruits and vegetables and record the list on the whiteboard (optional). Then review the benefits of eating these foods, including increased vitamin, mineral and fiber intake and fuel for the body that doesn't pack in a lot of calories. Brainstorm and record a list of not-so-healthy foods. Next, discuss how a lack of fruits and vegetables and too much junk food in the diet can lead to weight gain, high blood pressure and vitamin deficiencies. Point out that these conditions can lead to poor heart health.
2. Discuss the different forms in which fruits and vegetables are available, including fresh, frozen, dried and canned. Explain that all can be healthy options, as long as they do not have too much added sugar or salt.
3. Tell students that today they will be playing a game that helps demonstrate the importance of eating plenty of fruits and vegetables and limiting junk food.
4. Explain the game like this: "The [beanbags] in the hoops represent fruits and vegetables. The [foam balls] in the hoops represent not-so-healthy food choices. The object of this game is to get as many fruits and vegetables into your group's hoop and to take as many of the not-so-healthy choices and put them in other groups' hoops. The group that ends with the most fruits and vegetables and the least junk foods in its hoop wins the round."



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5. Continue: “On my signal, each of you may pick up one junk food and place it in any other group’s hoop. At the other group’s hoop, each of you may pick up one fruit or vegetable and take it back to your group’s hoop. Your group does not have to stay together; each person can work independently. However, you may not guard your group’s hoop. Focus on getting rid of junk foods and retrieving fruits and vegetables. Place the foods in your hoop; please do not throw them. Move safely throughout the play space, avoiding collisions.”



6. Divide the class into equal groups of four or five students each. Place one group at each hoop. Run a test round with all students walking to ensure they understand the rules and are playing safely.
7. Play several rounds of one to three minutes each, having students reset the hoops with the original number of foods each round.
8. Conclude the activity by gathering students back together for debriefing. Review the importance of eating more fruits and vegetables and fewer junk foods. State, “A health-promoting guideline for children is to fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables at each meal. Fruits and vegetables also make delicious and nutritious snacks.” Encourage students to suggest favorite fruits and vegetables or unusual ones they might not have tried. As a class, set a goal of trying one of these before the next class.



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9. Open the next class with a reminder of the goal. Find out what new fruits and vegetables students tried and which they'd like to try.

FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS:

- Use plastic toy food instead of beanbags, etc.
- Use more fruits and vegetables than junk foods.
- Play shorter rounds.

FOR OLDER STUDENTS:

- For increased heart health, help students brainstorm ways to alter the game to safely increase the intensity of the physical activity. For example, students might suggest hopping or doing ten jumping jacks before picking up or dropping a food.
- Give each student one sturdy paper plate. Require students to move foods by scooping them up with the paper plate and balancing them on the paper plate between hoops.
- Randomly give each student a cooking tool, such as a slotted spoon, pancake turner or pair of barbecue tongs. Require students to move foods using the tools.