

A Healthy Diet in Europe

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Part 1: Practical Guidance and Didactical Approach

Background and keywords:

In November 2006, the European Commission published a new Eurobarometer on nutrition and health (European Commission 2006). The findings indicate that the majority of Europeans consider that they are in good health, whereas 38% feel they are overweight. Nevertheless, all Europeans recognize the importance of a healthy diet and are aware of the health risks related to being overweight. One of the major changes in eating habits has been summed up as the consumption of less fat and more vegetables.

In order to further promote such positive developments, it is of utmost importance that pupils be provided with correct, scientifically validated information about healthy eating practices. This is all the more important, as there is a high risk of obesity among boys. The Eurobarometer makes a strong case for such a trend. In addition, eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia are no longer strictly a female problem. In the meantime, during the teen years, such disorders are commonly referred to as the disease of modern society which, as emphasized, have also been observed amongst boys for some time now. Nevertheless, obesity is currently the most serious consequence of poor eating habits amongst boys. Therefore, a healthy diet constitutes an important subject for young persons. It should be clearly pointed out that this module is also applicable for classes with girls.

With this module, boys (and also girls), learn proper eating habits on the basis of country-specific nutrition models. This is a practical model recommending specific daily quantities and menu plans for easy implementation in a given country.

Keywords: Healthy eating habits; nutrition models in Europe; Body Mass Index (BMI); energy; nutrients and their function; Daily Intake; food tables.

Similar topics:

See above-referenced keywords

Materials:

- Information sheet on the "different food groups" (to copy);
- Tracking your daily food intake Diagram (to copy);
- Table (to copy);
- Background information on the Belgian nutrition model;
- "Active Food Pyramid" diagram (to copy);
- Advertising flyer with foodstuffs;
- Scissors, glue, pencil, felt-tipped pen;
- One A3 sheet of paper and scrap paper.

Duration:

- Personal assignment (prepared individually): write down all your meals for three days
- Teaching time: 2 times 2 class sessions

Number of participants:

Four or more pupils; ideal with classes of up to 20 pupils

Age:

From about 9 years of age onwards (fourth school year)

Aims:

- To enable children to track their eating habits;
- To make the connection between quality and quantity in terms of food and health;
- To increase their awareness that they can influence and determine their own eating habits.

(Short) Explanation:

The pupils write down what they eat and drink over a couple of days and bring this information to school. The teacher explains the typical country model for a healthy diet (see background section). The pupils categorize and analyze their daily meals, share nutrition tips and work together on preparing an ideal daily, meal plan (group work).

Variation(s):

The group work is a variation of the first individual task. In group work, the pupils learn how to prepare a healthy menu while working together. During the evaluation, the teacher must ensure that the menu plan put together is actually healthy.

Reflection:

- Compare the individually filled-out Food Pyramid with the nutrition model presented!
 - What similarities and differences can you find?
 - What do you eat too much of? What don't you eat enough of?
- Group work: hang all of the filled-out meal records on the wall. Take out an unfilled-out Food Pyramid. Note all of the meals in the Food Pyramid. Is your daily meal a healthy one?