What is a Vegetable or Fruit?

Vegetable & Fruit Learning Activity

This activity introduces students to vegetables and fruit. They will become familiar with different vegetables and fruit through exposure and creativity.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

BIG IDEAS

- Knowing about our bodies and making healthy choices helps us look after ourselves.
- Good health comprises physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

- Identify and explore a variety of foods and describe how they contribute to health.
- Identify opportunities to make choices that contribute to health and well-being.
- Identify and describe practices that promote mental well-being.

CONTENT

- Relationships between food, hydration, and health.
- Practices that promote health and well-being.
FIRST PEOPLES PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING FOR ALL STUDENTS

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

RELATIONSHIPS AND ENVIRONMENTS

- Ensure students work with several different classmates during these activities.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Explain how this activity contributes to healthy eating behaviour.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Plan a field trip to a local farm, grower or market.

OUR SCHOOL POLICIES

- Make a student led class set of healthy eating guidelines. This can be expanded school wide (e.g., litter-less lunch, Play First lunch, policies around healthy choices).

PREPARATION

- Review the Vegetables and Fruit section of the Action Schools! BC Healthy Eating Overview (included with this activity).
- Display the Action Schools! BC Vegetables and Fruit Posters (available from www.actionschoolsbc.ca/resources).
IMPLEMENTATION

• Display the Vegetables and Fruit Posters, and discuss with students the vegetables and fruit pictured on the poster and the definitions on the posters.
• Alternatively, bring in a variety of vegetables and fruit, and have students identify and group them according to patterns of colour, family, where they grow, etc.
• Pose the question to each student; how does eating Vegetables and Fruits make them feel?

EXTENSION OF LEARNING

• Action Schools! BC’s Collect Your Colours Activity (www.actionschoolsbc.ca/resources)
• Action Schools! BC’s Vegetables and Fruit Class Challenge (www.actionschoolsbc.ca/resources)
• Have students grow their own vegetable or fruit.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

• Action Schools! BC Vegetables and Fruit Posters (F) (www.actionschoolsbc.ca/resources)
• HealthLink BC: Call 811 and speak with a registered dietitian
• Smart Fruit and Veggie Songs CD or search for “vegetable songs” or “fruit songs” on YouTube.
OVERVIEW: VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

This section explains why it is important to eat vegetables and fruit.

Information relating to conducting tasting activities with students, food safety considerations, messaging relating to variety and information on produce grown in BC can be found in this section.

Recommended guidelines:

- Make a healthy choice. Fill half your plate with fruits and veggies.
- Children aged 4 to 8 should eat a minimum of 5 food guide servings of vegetables and fruit each day.
- Children and youth aged 9 to 13 should eat a minimum of 6 food guide servings of vegetables and fruit each day.
- Eat one dark green and one orange vegetable each day.
- Choose vegetables and fruit more often than juice.
- Drink water – it’s always a great choice.

Why Are They Important?

The Vegetables and Fruit food group is the largest arc in the rainbow on Canada’s Food Guide, emphasizing the key role these foods play in a healthy eating pattern.

Vegetables and fruit include important nutrients such as carbohydrates (including fibre), vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Choosing a wide variety of colourful vegetables and fruit helps to ensure we get all of the nutrients we need.

A diet that includes a wide variety of vegetables and fruit helps children to grow, learn and play. Additionally, this may help reduce the risk of cardiovascular or heart disease and some types of cancer, as well as help to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

The recommended number of servings is different for people at different stages of life and is different for males and females after age 14. Canada’s Food Guide recommends a minimum of 5 servings a day of vegetables and fruit for children aged 4 to 8 years and a minimum of 6 per day for children aged 9 to 13 years.


Canada’s Food Guide has been translated into 12 languages. Visit Health Canada’s website to download translated copies. In addition to the translated Food Guides, Canada also has a First Nations, Inuit and Métis Food Guide. The “My Food Guide” tool on the Health Canada website allows individuals to create a personalized food guide using the foods that are part of their eating pattern. You can choose to print this tool in either English or French.
What Is a Vegetable?
Vegetable is not a botanical term, but rather a culinary term which generally refers to any edible part of a plant that is not regarded as a fruit, nut, herb, spice, or grain. Vegetables can include leaves (lettuce), stems (asparagus), roots (carrots), tubers (potatoes), flowers (broccoli), bulbs (garlic), and seeds (peas and beans). Some botanical fruit such as cucumbers, squash, pumpkins, tomatoes, and sweet peppers are usually referred to as vegetables.

What Is a Fruit?
In botany, a fruit is the ripened seed-bearing part of a flowering plant. In cuisine when discussing fruit as food, the term usually refers to just those plant fruits that are sweet and fleshy (e.g., plums, apples, and oranges). Many foods are botanically fruit but are treated as vegetables in cooking. These include cucurbits (e.g., squash, pumpkins, and cucumbers), tomatoes, peas, beans, corn, eggplants, and peppers.

Vegetable and Fruit Tasting
Repeated exposure to food, including seeing, smelling, and touching new food, and preparation and tasting, is the most effective way to influence a child’s eating behaviours. See the Action Schools! BC Extension Activities, available at www.actionschoolsbc.ca for great ways to conduct tasting activities with students.

- The objective of a tasting party is to have students sample a vegetable or fruit – not to provide a full serving to each student.
- Children may be more willing to try new types of food with their peers. Providing a relaxed setting without forcing them to try new foods helps to build a healthy relationship with food.
- Fresh vegetables and fruit work best for tasting activities. Choose local vegetables and fruit that are in season when possible. If fresh vegetables and fruit are not available, try dried fruit with no added sugar; frozen vegetables and fruit with no added salt or sugar; or canned vegetables and fruit in water, juice, or light syrup (has added sugar).
• See the Food Safety Considerations information for important reminders about food safety when conducting tasting activities with students.

• Visit Healthy Schools BC for programs and supports that may be available to your school to support healthy eating, including providing grants or fruits and vegetables directly (www.healthyschoolsbc.ca).

• Using Food Tasting Chart (available at www.actionschoolsbc.ca/resources) allows students to reflect on what they are tasting, use their senses, and develop their vocabulary.

Buying Locally Grown Food Has Many Advantages
Whether it is purchasing the produce for your Tasting Party or teaching students about the food system, it is important to highlight the benefits of growing and/or purchasing local food.

Buying Locally Is Good for the Economy
Dollars spent on locally grown food are reinvested back into the community, which contributes to the growth of small businesses, generates local jobs, raises property values, and leads to strong health care, education, and recreation sectors.

Buying Locally Is Good for the Environment
Food produced and consumed locally has a smaller carbon footprint. It uses less fossil fuel for transportation and requires less material for packaging compared to mainstream food production.

References

• BC Agriculture in the Classroom (www.aitc.ca/bc/)

Recommended Resources
• Healthy Families BC (www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/eating)

• HealthLink BC – Healthy Eating (www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating)

• Health Canada
  • Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide (available in 12 languages and for First Nations, Inuit and Métis; free class sets available) (http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php)


• HealthLink BC: Call 811 and speak with a registered dietitian (www.healthlinkbc.ca)

• Canadian Paediatric Society – Caring for Kids (www.caringforkids.cps.ca)
BC Grown Vegetables and Fruit

An abundance of produce grows right here in BC. With a wide variety of climates and growing conditions, availability throughout the province varies.

**Spring**
- apples • Asian vegetables* • asparagus
- cabbage • celery • chard • cucumbers
- garlic • kale • leeks • lettuce
- mustard greens • onions • parsnips
- peas • potatoes • radishes
- rhubarb • salad greens • spinach
- tomatoes • turnips

**Summer**
- apples • apricots • artichokes
- Asian vegetables* • asparagus
- beans • beets • blackberries
- blueberries • broccoli • Brussels sprouts • cabbage • carrots
- cauliflower • celery • chard • cherries
- corn • cucumbers • currents • eggplant
- fennel • garlic • gooseberries • grapes
- huckleberries • kale • leeks • lettuce
- melons • mustard greens • nectarines • onions
- parsnips • peaches • pear • peas • peppers
- plums • potatoes • prunes • pumpkins
- quince • radishes • raspberries • rhubarb
- rutabagas • salad greens
- Saskatoon berries • shallots
- spinach • strawberries
- summer squash
- tomatoes • turnip
- winter squash
- zucchini

**Fall**
- apples • Asian vegetables* • artichokes • beets • beans
- blueberries • broccoli
- Brussels sprouts • cabbage • carrots • cauliflower • celery
- chard • corn • cranberries
- cucumber • eggplant • fennel
- garlic • grapes • huckleberries • kale
- kiwi • leeks • lettuce • melons
- mustard greens • onions • parsnips
- pears • peppers • plums • potatoes
- prunes • pumpkin • quince • radishes
- rutabaga • salad greens • spinach
- strawberries • tomatoes • turnips
- winter squash • zucchini

**Winter**
- apples • beets
- Brussels sprouts • cabbage • carrots
- cucumbers • kale
- kiwi • leeks • onions
- parsnips • pears
- potatoes • pumpkin
- rutabagas • turnips
- winter squash

* (e.g. bok choy, choy sum, gai chong, sui choy, gai lan, daikon, lotus root)

Check out what’s grown in your region at
www.farmfolkcityfolk.ca
FOOD SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

There are steps to take to prevent illness and make fresh vegetables and fruit safe to eat.

- When buying and storing vegetables and fruit, always keep them separate from raw foods such as meat, poultry and seafood. Juices from raw foods can be contaminated with germs that cause illness.
- Always wash hands with soap and warm running water before preparing any food, including vegetables and fruit.
- Any person who is sick and has symptoms of diarrhea or vomiting, or who has infected cuts or sores, should not be allowed to handle food in any way.
- Always wash and sanitize* surfaces where foods are prepared and placed.
- Dishcloths must be washed well and sanitized regularly.
- Take extra care to thoroughly clean vegetables and fruit, especially dirty produce. Wash them in a diluted dish soap solution and then rinse in clean running water.
- When washing vegetables and fruit, cut away any damaged or bruised areas since harmful germs can grow there. Compost or throw away any rotten vegetables and fruit.
- Wash and scrub vegetables and fruit that have a firm, rough surface such as potatoes, using a clean scrub brush for produce.
- Always wash vegetables and fruit that have a rind, before peeling or preparing them, such as pineapples, cantaloupe, oranges, melon and squash. Although the skin and outer surfaces protect them, germs can grow if the surface gets broken, pierced or cut, especially in melons and tomatoes.
- Always discard the outer leaves of leafy vegetables grown in or near the ground, such as lettuce and cabbage. The outer leaves are more likely to be contaminated with germs.
- Raw sprouted seed products, such as bean sprouts, radish sprouts, alfalfa sprouts, mung beans and others, may carry germs that cause illness. Always cook these before eating because it is difficult to wash sprouted seeds.
- Contaminated foods may not look or smell bad so if in doubt, throw it out!
- Be cognizant of any food allergies that your students may have prior to activities that involve food.
- You can make a sanitizing solution:
  - Mix 15 ml (1 tablespoon) of household bleach into 4 L (1 gallon) of water; or,
  - Mix 5 ml (1 teaspoon) of household bleach into 1 litre (4 cups) of water.

Adapted from: Food Safety for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and Ten Easy Steps to Make Food Safe, HealthLink BC

Recommended Resources

- Do Bugs Need Drugs? (www.dobugsneeddrugs.org)
- HealthLink BC: Call 811 and speak with a registered dietitian (www.healthlinkbc.ca)