

Understanding a diet

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To understand what is meant by a diet and a healthy eating plan
- To understand that diet can be adjusted to make it healthier or to take account of medical conditions
- To describe healthy eating plans and diets



RESOURCES

- Cards or sticky notes
- Large sheet of paper or card and cardboard dustbin shape (Engage activity)
- Diet sheets and leaflets about healthy eating or relating to relevant medical conditions

- Highlighter pens
- Copies of Resources 1 and 2

RELATED THEMES

Food groups (pages 4–12)

HEALTH SKILLS

Learners need to understand that, in general terms, a diet is the food you eat on a day-to-day basis, but that there are circumstances when you may need to adjust your diet to help deal with specific medical conditions. Some learners may have encountered diet sheets or leaflets that encourage a healthy approach to eating; these need to be understood and applied to everyday life.

Where learners share common health conditions or intolerances, activities can focus specifically on these conditions and the relevant diet recommendations.

SKILLS FOR LIFE

A substantial amount of literature about healthy eating and diets is available. Learners may find it useful to understand the language used to encourage people to eat more or less of certain food groups and to discuss the principles of healthy eating. Learners will need the following literacy skills to access advice given in leaflets and diet sheets:

- understand the language used to describe healthy eating and diets
- understand the purpose and content of text in a range of formats.

Core curriculum

Activities in this theme will contribute to learning in the following curriculum areas:

- understand the purpose of different types of text (LRt/E3.2)
- recognise and understand a range of specialist key words (LRw/E3.1)
- relate words that have similar meanings (LRw/L1.3)
- read to understand detailed information (LRt/E3.8).

- Find out what learners understand from the terms 'healthy eating plan' and 'diet'. The word 'diet' is often used in the context of losing weight. Ensure learners realise that, in health terms, it refers to our day-to-day long-term eating habits, not to radical or temporary changes. Introduce 'healthy eating plan' as an alternative term. The word 'diet' is often used to describe a general healthy eating plan adjusted to help a particular condition such as heart disease or irritable bowel syndrome.
- In small groups, ask learners to think of food items and to write each clearly on a sticky note or piece of card. As a group or in smaller groups, learners can then sort the food items into foods they think you should eat plenty of and those that you should eat less of. A large sheet of paper can be prepared for this activity in advance. Learners may feel that some items should be 'binned' – provide a dustbin shape for these items. Check that items are binned on the basis of their nutritional value, rather than on personal preferences or prejudices. To help learners, you may want to use the 'food plate' discussed in Theme 1, 'Food groups'.
- Discuss the outcomes with the whole group. Ask why it is important to eat more of some foods than others. Encourage the principle that healthy eating involves eating a good selection of foods in a balanced way. Show learners an example of a balanced food plate, as described in Theme 1 and healthy eating plans produced by dietetics departments and available in health centres, pharmacies and community settings.
- Introduce the term 'allergy' and make sure everyone understands it. Distinguish between 'food intolerance' and 'food allergy' (see the Glossary) and write definitions on the board / flipchart. Ask learners how they would sort foods differently if they were intolerant to things that contained wheat. What food items would they bin?
- Ask the group if they know of other medical conditions that affect what you can eat. Use learners' experience and the food plate to demonstrate how someone might have to adjust their diet according to recommendations for a particular health condition (e.g. 'Which food items should we take out if you have been told to avoid fatty foods?', 'Which foods should we take out for someone who is intolerant to dairy?').

What does the word 'diet' mean?

Are there certain foods that some people MUST NOT eat?

ACTIVITY 1

Introduce the concept of diet sheets and how they are worded

- Remind learners that a lot of information about diets is available. In the case of existing or new medical conditions (e.g. heart disease), people are often given advice about foods to avoid or to eat more of. Diet sheets and leaflets are available from GP practices, health centres, pharmacies and from hospital dietetics departments.
- Explore Resource 1 and point out the different expressions used to indicate what should or should not be included in a healthy diet, for example 'cut down on ...', 'include more ...', etc. Use the opportunity to discuss food groups and to explain terms such as 'oily fish', 'saturated fats'. Give examples, such as mackerel (oily fish), butter (saturated fat). Point out and list words that encourage

Where can you get diet information if you have a medical condition or allergy?

the inclusion of certain food types. Similarly, list words that encourage ('eat plenty of', 'increase') and discourage ('limit', 'reduce') the inclusion of other food types. These can be referred to as positive and negative words and phrases or 'Dos and don'ts'.

- Give out a range of leaflets relating to healthy eating or to particular health conditions that are relevant to your group of learners. Ask learners in small groups to look for words and language that indicate what they should and should not include in their diets. Ask them to highlight these to share with the group. They can then record the items in the table on Resource 2. Some learners may prefer to put in pictures of foods or food labels.

If you have a medical condition or allergy, how will you know what you should or should not eat?

Support

- Some leaflets are more readable than others, so more confident learners may be able to support others with this activity.
- Learners may need support to scan leaflets. For learners whose reading skills are below Entry 3, provide specific words on cards to find and sort (e.g. Can you find the word 'less' in this leaflet? Can you find the word 'more' in the leaflet?)

ESOL

- Ask learners to read the 'heart-friendly' diet, highlighting advice that encourages them to do something (e.g. 'Eat at least five portions ...', 'Grill or bake ...') or not to do something (e.g. 'Limit your salt intake ...').
- Discuss specific foods that they might eat and those they should cut down on.
- This might be a good opportunity for ESOL learners to share recipes or ideas for healthier meals with others in the group.

TIP

When scanning leaflets, encourage learners to look at headings and pictures for clues to content.

ACTIVITY 2

Find information about specific food groups using leaflets and diet sheets

- Following on from Activity 1, ask learners to look again at the leaflets and diet sheets to find a specific food type, such as 'fats' or 'dairy'. Ask them to use the words and phrases previously highlighted to decide which side of the table in Resource 2 these foods should go in.
- This activity can be repeated for different food groups, or each group could be given a food group to investigate, depending on their health concerns.
- Share and discuss the results at the end.

Do diet sheets and leaflets always encourage you to eat more fruit and vegetables?

What is the general advice on other food groups?

Support

Check that learners understand and can recognise food groups. Refer to activities in Theme 1 for more activities relating to food groups.

ESOL

- Provide cards with pictures of different types of food, including foods that learners use in their cooking. Ask them to put them into categories (fatty foods, sugary foods, starchy foods, high in fibre, low in calories, high in calories).
- Where foods fall into categories that they should avoid (e.g. high fat, sugar or salt), discuss alternatives that learners might use in cooking (e.g. replacing ghee with sunflower oil).

- Where a group has a particular health focus, such as reducing cholesterol intake or losing weight, Activity 2 can be repeated using diet sheets and leaflets that are specific to learners' particular needs or condition. By looking for the positive and negative language used in leaflets, learners should be able to identify food types (or items) that are specifically recommended or not recommended. Learners may then construct a list of foods to include in their particular diet and those to avoid.
- If the learners' interest in diet is more general, ask them to set one specific target for the coming week, such as 'I will only have one teaspoon of sugar in my tea instead of two', 'I will eat X pieces of fruit each day', 'I will look at food labels and check the fat content of the foods before I buy.'

Is there something about your diet that you would like or need to change?

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RESOURCE 1

Some conditions are helped by changing what you eat. Diet sheets, healthy eating plans and leaflets will help you to improve your diet.

Try to avoid ...

Reduce your intake of ...

Cut down on ...



Isn't a diet just about losing weight?

Choose ... instead of ...

Try to eat more ...

Include more ...

A 'heart-friendly' diet



- Eat at least two portions of fish every week, one of which should be oily fish (e.g. salmon, trout, mackerel).
- Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day to provide fibre, vitamins and minerals.
- Choose wholemeal bread, rice and pasta.
- Use vegetable oil (e.g. olive oil or hemp seed oil) rather than animal fat for cooking.
- Try to grill or bake food rather than frying it.
- Eat less red meat and more lean white meat (e.g. chicken).
- Cut down on your intake of saturated fats (such as animal fat and hard fats like butter).
- Eat less sugary food (e.g. cakes and biscuits).
- Limit your salt intake to no more than 6 grams a day (that's a teaspoonful).
- Limit your alcohol intake.

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RESOURCE 2

Eat more	Eat less
Food types	Food types
Add any words or phrases that encourage you to include these foods in your diet.	Add any words or phrases that discourage you from eating these foods.

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There are no audio scripts for this theme.

ACTIVITY 1 / Resource 2

These are some suggestions and examples.

Eat more	Eat less
Food types	Food types
Fruit and vegetables Fibre Starch	Fat Sugars
Add any words or phrases that encourage you to include these foods in your diet.	Add any words or phrases that discourage you from eating these foods.
Recommended Choose Fill up on Include Eat more Increase your intake Eat plenty of Should include	Reduce Cut down Limit Avoid Replace Eat fewer In moderation