



*Developed to
encourage
and enhance
a young
child's healthy
beginning.*

BLEND Beginnings

My Healthy Foods

MY HEALTHY FOODS KEY MESSAGES

As a child care provider, you have a wonderful opportunity to help lay a healthy foundation for many young children. Caregivers play key roles as a teacher and as a role model to enable children to learn, value, and practice behaviors that promote good health. As a teacher, you can help a child learn about food and fitness and their importance. As a role model, you can show the children that eating healthy foods and being physically active are enjoyable.

Over the years, researchers have realized how important the role of caregiver is. Because of this significant role, it is important to educate caregivers – along with school teachers, parents, and young children – about nutrition. In addition, it's important to share practical strategies for encouraging preschoolers to try new foods. Here is what the researchers are saying:

- *The preschool years are a critical time to introduce and encourage healthy nutrition. Researchers say that early exposure to healthful foods helps children establish good eating habits that carry into adulthood. Additionally, children establish food preferences and dietary habits during the first six years of life (Birch, 1998).*
- *With the rise in childhood overweight, it is important that we establish healthful eating habits early in life. During this critical time, it is essential to introduce a variety of foods to children at an early age. Child Care Providers, along with parents, are influential in the eating practices in young children in several ways. They control availability and accessibility of foods, determine how and when meals are served, model eating behaviors, and establish good manners and etiquette around food (Ray & Klesges 1993; Nicklas et al. 2001).***[this last reference does not appear on page 47]**

Research also shows that through repeated exposure and with the help of positive role models, preschoolers can learn to like wholesome foods and can develop good dietary practices. As a child's caregiver, teacher, and role model, you can guide children to the right choices by helping them learn about healthy eating and giving them the tools to choose a variety of nutritious foods.

This unit will continue to engage children in a child's play format that reinforces positive messages of nutrition and physical activity. However, to enhance this unit, recommendations from the USDA's MyPyramid were added to help inform you and your staff about the food groups and how to properly fuel young children. The USDA's MyPyramid is a food guidance system created to help people make healthy food choices. It is a fantastic resource, but it is far too complex for young children to understand. The BLEND Beginnings Program uses its content, but has adapted the material to make it much more teachable and comprehensible for 2–5 year olds. Go to the USDA website and visit their new addition, "MyPyramid for Preschoolers," at:

<http://www.mypyramid.gov/preschoolers/>

Content reviewed by Mary Caskey, Extension Educator, Health and Nutrition



MY HEALTHY FOODS KEY MESSAGES

Nutrient-rich foods are needed for a healthy body. It is important to include those nutrient-rich foods daily – colorful fruits and vegetables; whole, fortified and fiber-rich grain foods; fat-free and low-fat dairy foods; and lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, and nuts. There are five food groups – each with a simple message and each delivering important nutrients to keep us healthy and energetic.

- **Grain Group (Orange) — "Make Half Your Grains Whole"***

The Grain Group, which includes foods like bread, cereal, rice, and pasta, provides the majority of the energy your child needs each day. These foods are high in complex carbohydrates, which are the body's favorite fuel. They give children the energy to play, pay attention in school, and do many other activities.

- **Vegetable Group (Green) — "Vary Your Veggies"***

The Vegetable Group is an excellent source of vitamins, especially vitamin A, which promotes healthy eyesight (night vision) and healthy skin.

- **Fruit Group (Red) — "Focus on Fruits"***

The Fruit Group foods are a good source of vitamin C which is needed daily. Vitamin C helps the body heal your wounds and create a healthy immune system.

- **Milk Group – Dairy (Blue) — "Get Your Calcium-Rich Foods"***

The Dairy Group, which includes milk and other foods like yogurt and cheese, is an important source of calcium. Calcium helps the body make strong bones and teeth.

- **Meat & Beans Group (Purple) — "Go Lean with Protein"***

The Meat & Beans Group helps you grow, maintain, and repair body tissues. Protein, along with physical activity, helps our bodies develop strong muscles. This group is also known as the "Meat and Bean Group."

**For more information about the food groups, health benefits, and daily recommendations, please read the BLEND Food Group Focus Newsletter created specifically for educators (starting on page 125).*

Tips for teaching young children about healthy foods:

1. Teach by example. Start with creating an environment that is conducive to positive messages about healthy foods. Encourage staff members to model the healthy message that is being taught.
2. Spend time with children – eating, playing, and talking.
3. Offer a variety of foods in a rainbow of colors.
4. Offer healthy snacks.
5. Try new foods.
6. Keep lessons short.
7. Don't be afraid to be silly and have fun!
8. Praise every child for his or her accomplishments and attempts!

References

Birch, L. 1998. *Development of food acceptance patterns in the first years of life.*

Proceedings of the Nutrition Society 57: 617-24.

Ray, J. W., & R. C. Klesges. 1993. *Influences on the eating behavior of children. Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences 699: 57-69.*

Nicklas TA, Baranowski T, Baranowski JC, Cullen K, Rittenberry L, Olvera N. *Family and child care provider influence on preschool children's fruit, juice and vegetable consumption. Nutrition Reviews 2001; 59(7):224-35.*



MY HEALTHY FOODS CIRCLE TIME

Good nutrition and learning go hand in hand. When children's nutritional needs are met, it's easier for them to focus and learn. Well-nourished children have higher test scores, better school attendance, and fewer classroom behavior problems.

Preparing the environment:

- Hang the USDA “MyPyramid for Preschoolers” Poster* in your designated Circle Time area.
- Use “My Healthy Food” Picture Cards* and “Dairy” Picture Cards, food models, and magazines during Circle Time for additional visual aids and to spark a conversation.
- “Healthy Food” Sitting Mats* should be available for the children to sit on during Circle Time conversations.
- Prepare reading books that support teaching about healthy foods.
- The BLEND Apron* should be worn by the staff member leading the session.
- Offer nutritious snacks that offer a rainbow of color. Don't forget variety!

**Materials available in the BLEND Beginnings Program Container*

Leading the BLEND Circle Time Session:

During Circle Time, introduce the USDA MyPyramid for Preschoolers poster and begin conversations about healthy foods. Talk about the MyPyramid poster and its details. For example, point out the colors of the pyramid (many should be familiar with the colors), the children playing and being physically active throughout the poster, and the foods in each group. Ask the children to name some of the foods on the poster and then ask what their favorite foods are.

Now ask the children to hold up one hand and spread their fingers. There are five food groups needed for good health. Call out each food group name, ask the children to repeat it out loud. Bend down a finger each time the children says a food group.

Remember to keep this unit simple, but give the children many opportunities to explore the many healthy and nutrient-rich foods available. The following is a quick reference to the benefits of each food group:

Grains (carbohydrates) give you energy.

Vegetables help your eyesight and your skin.

Fruits help you heal your wounds and create a healthy immune system.

Calcium helps build strong bones and teeth.

Meat & Beans helps you grow and repairs body tissues. Helps build strong muscles, too.



MY HEALTHY FOODS LESSON PLANS

Week 9 My Healthy Foods

Day 1 - Circle Time (10 minutes) Introduce the **Milk Group** and begin conversations about how foods from this group are the best sources of CALCIUM needed for healthy, strong bones and teeth. Tell the children their bodies take the calcium out of the milk and put it in their bones and teeth. Additionally, teach the song: *I Am Healthy* (page 52).

Milk Group: milk, (including chocolate and strawberry), yogurt, cheese, ice cream, cottage cheese.

Include the following activities in your conversation:

- Milk Cartons (page 52)
- Bone Bottles (page 52)
- BLEND's Healthy Foods (page 53)

Activity Time (15 minutes) Select from the following activities:

- Calcium Tubes (page 53)
- Strong Bones Game (page 53)
- Milk Matter Coloring Book (page 53) Included in container

Energy Time (30 minutes) Select from the following Physical Activity games:

- Milk Exercises (page 54)
- Sponge Play (page 54)

Day 2 - Circle Time (10 minutes) Introduce the **Grains Group** and talk about how foods from this group give us energy.

Grain Group: wheat, rice, oats. These grains make bread, cereal, oatmeal, pasta, crackers, and tortillas.

Include the following activities in your conversation:

- BLEND's Healthy Foods (page 53)
- Energy Toys (page 54)

Activity Time (15 minutes) Select from the following activities:

- BLEND Rice Art (page 55)
- Grain Music (page 55)
- Letter Sandwiches Snack (page 55)

Energy Time (30 minutes) Select from the following Physical Activity games:

- Indoor Basketball (page 56)
- Musical Spaghetti (page 56)



MY HEALTHY FOODS LESSON PLANS

Week 10 My Healthy Foods

Day 1 - Circle Time (10 minutes) Introduce the **Meat & Beans Group** and begin conversations about how foods from this group are needed to help our bodies grow and repair themselves. Along with exercise, protein helps our bodies develop strong muscles. The Meat & Bean Group can be divided into several categories – animals, fish and shellfish, and plants. The first day you will discuss the animals and plants (beans) in this group. Fish will be talked about on Day 2.

Meat & Beans Group: meat, game meat, legumes (beans), nuts and seeds (e.g., peanut butter), eggs.

Include the following activities in your conversation:

- BLEND's Healthy Foods (page 53)

Activity Time (15 minutes) Select from the following activities:

- Animals and Plants (page 56)
- Sorted Beans (page 57)

Energy Time (30 minutes) Select from the following Physical Activity games:

- Muscle Flex (page 57)
- Activity Spinner (page 57)

Day 2 - Circle Time (10 minutes) Continue to talk about the **Meat & Beans Group**. Focus on fish and shellfish in this group.

Meat & Beans Group: freshwater fish (e.g., walleye and crappie), saltwater fish (e.g., tuna and cod), and shellfish (e.g., clams and lobster).

Include the following activities in your conversation:

- BLEND's Healthy Foods (page 53)

Activity Time (15 minutes) Select from the following activities:

- Fishing (page 58)
- Fishy, Fishy in the Sea (page 58)

Energy Time (30 minutes) Select from the following Physical Activity games:

- All Fall Down (page 59)
- Skating Fun (page 59)



MY HEALTHY FOODS

Week 11 My Healthy Foods

Day 1 - Circle time (10 minutes) Introduce the **Fruit Group** and begin conversations about how foods from this group are needed to help heal your wounds and create a healthy immune system to prevent illness. Talk about Vitamin C (show the children the letter C) –Vitamin C heals your cuts and bruises.

Fruit Group: local fruit, tropical fruit, wild fruit, tree fruit, vine fruit. Fruit can be fresh, canned, frozen, or 100% juice.

Include the following activities in your conversation:

- BLEND's Healthy Foods (page 53)
- Favorite Fruit Poem (page 59)

Activity Time (15 minutes) Select from the following activities:

- Grape Painting (page 60)
- Band-Aid (page 60)

Energy Time (30 minutes) Select from the following Physical Activity games:

- Super Stretch (page 60)
- Bean Bag Bonanza (page 61)

Day 2 - Circle time (10 minutes) Introduce the **Vegetable Group** and talk about how foods from this group helps your eyesight and your skin. Talk about Vitamin A (show the children the letter A) – Vitamin A keeps your eyes and skin healthy.

Vegetable Group: garden vegetables (root, vine, plant), farm vegetables (field). Vegetables can be fresh, canned, frozen, or 100% juice.

Include the following activities in your conversation:

- BLEND's Healthy Foods (page 53)
- I Like Veggies! Poem (page 61)

Activity Time (15 minutes)

- Shaken Confetti Vegetables (page 61)

Energy Time (30 minutes) Select from the following Physical Activity games:

- Basket Targets (page 62)
- Hop To It (page 62)



BLEND Beginnings

I Am Healthy Song

Sing this song to the tune of Frère Jacques:

**I am Healthy, I am Healthy...
Yes I am, yes I am!
I eat healthy foods, and I exercise...
Yes I do, yes I do!**

Milk Cartons

University of Minnesota Extension Regional Office - Stearns County Nutrition Education

Show milk cartons to the children – calcium is in milk. Their body takes the calcium out of the milk and puts it in their bones and teeth. Talk about where milk comes from – show pictures of a cow.

Bone Bottles

University of Minnesota Extension Regional Office - Stearns County Nutrition Education

This activity will help the children understand what calcium does for their bones. If you eat and drink dairy products, you will have strong bones.

What you need:

Milk carton
2 plastic water bottles
Cotton Balls

What to do:

First, stuff one of the water bottles tightly with cotton balls; stuff the other bottle loosely. Next, show the milk carton to the children and tell them that calcium is in milk. Their body takes the calcium out of the milk and puts it in their bones and teeth. Now, explain to the children that the water bottle (stuffed with cotton balls) is like a bone with a lot of calcium; the other is like a bone with not enough calcium.



BLEND's Healthy Foods

This is a unit-long activity that will encourage children to help BLEND eat healthy.

What you need:

BLEND Character and Food Group Circles (*included in BLEND Beginnings Program container*)

Pictures of healthy food (magazines, grocery ads, etc)

Tape

What to do:

Hang the BLEND Character and Food Group Circles in your designated Circle Time area – take a look at the picture on page 63 and see how to hang this activity. Explain to the children...*“During the next few weeks, we are going to teach BLEND how to eat foods that will help him grow, feel good and be his best at playing and at learning time. We'll make our own food group wall for BLEND as we learn about each of the five food groups.”*

When you introduce each food group, talk about all the healthy foods that are in the group. After each food group session, ask the children to find pictures of healthy foods in magazines and grocery ads and cut them out. You may need to assist the children with this part of the activity. Ask the children to tape the pictures on the large circle. At the end of the activity, tape the picture-filled circle up by BLEND and tell the children that he will grow up strong and healthy thanks to their help!

Calcium Tubes

University of Minnesota Extension Regional Office - Stearns County Nutrition Education

What you need:

Toilet paper tubes

Pictures of calcium foods

What to do:

Cut the toilet paper roll along one side. Glue pictures of calcium foods in the middle of the tube. Slip the tubes over a child's arm to show that each time you eat a calcium food you add a layer of calcium to your bones.

Strong Bones

University of Minnesota Extension Regional Office - Stearns County Nutrition Education

Gather the children and play the “Strong Bones” game (*available in the BLEND Beginnings Program container – instructions attached*).

Milk Matters Coloring Book*

The NICHD's (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) Milk Matters campaign offers a number of free publications and materials about the importance of calcium for children.

www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs_details.cfm?from=milk&pubs_id=5639

**Milk Matters Coloring Book is available in the BLEND Beginnings Program container.*



BLEND Beginnings

Milk Exercise

University of Minnesota Extension Regional Office - Stearns County Nutrition Education

Get active and build muscles with milk jugs.

What you need:

Empty milk jugs

Materials to add weight to the jugs

What you do:

Collect several milk jugs and save for physical activity sessions. For this activity, give milk jugs to the children and lead them in stretches and exercises. Some ideas: Reach up high and down low, reach from side to side, and hand off to a partner.

Sponge Play

It is important to promote all types of physical activities for both boys and girls; avoiding comments about what boys and girls should or should not do. Sponge Play lets children learn to catch and throw the proper way without risk of injury.

Use soft sponges in all different sizes and shapes. Dampen the sponges and wring dry. Instruct the children how to throw under-handed and over-handed. Pay close attention to the proper techniques of throwing. Follow these simple rules when guiding children:

Throwing Cues:

- Stand with non-throwing arm/side towards target
- Eyes on target
- Step with the opposite foot (opposite arm – opposite foot)
- Follow through

Throwing Progressions:

The most important part about learning how to throw is learning to step with the opposite foot from the throwing arm. Stand with non-throwing side facing target, step forward with left foot (*for right-handed throwers*), aim at the target, throw, and follow through.

Energy Toys

University of Minnesota Extension Regional Office - Stearns County Nutrition Education

The children will learn that toys are like our bodies – both need energy to work properly and efficiently.

What you need:

Battery operated toys

Flashlight

Wind up cars

Batteries

What to do:

Take the batteries out of the toys before you gather the children. Show the children the toys and talk about why the toy doesn't work. Ask them what they think. Explain that the toy needs some "energy" to make it to work. Now put the batteries in the toys and turn it on – the batteries give it the energy it needs to work. Explain to the children that these toys are like our bodies – you need the energy to fuel your body so it can work properly. Carbohydrates (grain foods) give you the energy you need.



BLEND Rice Art

What you need:

White rice
Brown rice
Wild rice
Glue
BLEND Face (see page 64)

What to do:

Make enough black and white copies of the BLEND logo for each child. Talk to the children about the grain “rice,” paying attention to the colors and the textures of the different rice. Explain to the children that they will create “rice art” with the varieties of rice. Help the children put some glue on their paper and have them start making their rice creations.

Grain Music

Make music with a variety of grains and containers! Gather an assortment of grains, such as: elbow macaroni, rice, oatmeal, spaghetti, etc. Then gather an assortment of empty containers, such as: empty cereal and oatmeal boxes, coffee cans, pots and pans, etc. Talk to the children about the grains being used. Ask the children to help you make musical instruments using these items. Place macaroni in a coffee can or rice in a salt box – be as creative and as you can be. Now, ask the children to make music of their own, play along with recorded music, or line up to create a marching band!

Letter Sandwich Snack

What you need:

Alphabet cereal
Sliced, whole-grain bread*
Jam, honey, low-fat cream cheese, or peanut butter

What to do:

Gather the children and give each child a slice of bread. Spread on the topping – determine if the children can spread on the topping or if staff should do the spreading. Give the children some alphabet cereal – help them spell their names or a simple word. Younger children will probably enjoy simply sticking the letters onto the bread in no particular order.

**If gluten allergies are present – please use gluten-free bread.*



BLEND Beginnings

Indoor Basketball

Scrunch up sheets of newspaper to make lots of small balls. Clear an area in the room; creating a safe environment. Before allowing the children to shoot the ball – talk to them about shooting (throwing). Over-hand throwing and shooting is a skill that needs practice to become proficient. Have the children pass the balls to a partner over-handed. Once they have practiced, set out some baskets to shoot in. Ask the children to start off close to the basket – have the children take a step back as they become better and more comfortable with shooting. This is a great activity to improve hand-eye coordination and skills.

Musical Spaghetti

Play this activity similar to “musical chairs.” Have the children sit in a circle with one less chair than players. The extra player is “it” and stands in the middle. When the music starts, “it” walks around the inside of the circle and takes the hand of another player. That player comes along with the child who is “it” and then takes the hand of another player. The “spaghetti” continues to grow until the music stops. Players then drop hands and run for the empty chairs. The person left standing becomes the new “it” and begins making another strand of spaghetti.

Animals and Plants

University of Minnesota Extension Regional Office - Stearns County Nutrition Education

This activity will help children recognize that protein can come from animals and plants.

What you need:

- Brown bags
- Pictures of meats & beans (animals and plants)
- Food models, food containers, etc.
- Glue

What to do:

Have the children gather around and talk to them about protein. Explain that protein can come from plant sources or animal sources – and, that it is very important for our bodies and muscles to help us grow up healthy and strong. Take the brown bags and label one “animals” and glue on some pictures of animals and the other “plants” and glue on pictures of plants. With the other gathered items (food models, containers), select one at a time and say “_____ gives you protein – it is an animal/plant protein.” Place the item in the appropriate brown bag. Continue with the other items. For older children, ask them “Where does this protein come from – plant or animal?”



Sorted Beans

University of Minnesota Extension Regional Office - Stearns County Nutrition Education

Introduce dry beans to the children by passing around various kinds of them. Have the children see and feel them. Talk about their color, shape, and size. Once the children become familiar with the dry beans, ask them if they would like to be challenged by sorting the beans!

What you need:

Assortment of dry beans
Egg cartons

What to do:

Give each child an egg carton. Fill one hole with a variety of beans. Have them sort out the different kinds and place in the other holes.

Muscle Flex

University of Minnesota Extension Regional Office - Stearns County Nutrition Education

Gather the children and have them stand in a circle. Start by showing the children how to flex their muscles by using your arm – tighten up the muscle and then relax the muscle. Now, it's their turn – start with the forehead and work down to the feet. As the instructor, really exaggerate your flexes or expressions and watch the children flex with strength and determination.

Activity Spinner

This activity incorporates physical activity and color recognition. Talk to the children about how physical activity makes our bodies healthy and strong.

What you need:

Large paper plate (*see page 65*)
4 pieces of paper (red, orange, green, blue)

What to do:

To begin, make a game spinner using the paper plate. Make a dime size hole in the middle of the plate. Then, divide the plate into four sections in four different colors. Label the **Red: Get Strong!**, **Orange: Move a Lot!**, **Green: Make Your Heart Beat Fast!**, and **Blue: Streeetch!**

Gather the children and ask for volunteers. One child will be needed to place his/her index finger through the hole in the plate, fingertip against a wall or table. Another child will spin the spinner while a third child marks a spot on the wall or table with his/her finger. When the spinner stops spinning, see which color is next to the child's finger.

You choose the activity from the list and call it out so children know what to do!



BLEND Beginnings

Fishing

University of Minnesota Extension Regional Office - Stearns County Nutrition Education

Remind the children that protein comes from animal foods and some plants. Fish are one kind of animal that gives us food.

What you need:

Laminated Fish Pictures (*included in BLEND Beginnings Program container*)

Magnet strips

String

Stick or short dowel

Blue towel, sheet, or blanket

What to do:

Using a stick or dowel create a fishing pole – tie the string to the stick and attach a piece of magnet strip to the end of the string. On the back side of each fish (by the mouth) attach another piece of the magnet strip. Now ask if anyone has gone fishing before. Show the pictures of the Minnesota fish. Name them and put them in the water (blue towel). One by one, ask each child to go fishing – talk about the fish that he/she pulls up.

Fishy, Fishy in the Sea

University of Minnesota Extension Regional Office - Stearns County Nutrition Education

Include this rhythm during this activity:

Fishy, fishy in the sea, what color protein will you be?

What you need:

Colored paper – blue, red, yellow, green, orange, and purple

Fish template (*see page 66*)

Brown bag

What to do:

Print copies of the fish on each of the six colors. Put two fish of each color in a brown bag. Then, give each child one color of each fish to hang on to. Say the rhythm above while reaching into the bag – pull out one fish. Ask the children what color of protein it is and have them match with their colored fish.

Tips:

- Remind the children that fish are considered a protein and that it is very important for our bodies.
- Protein helps develop strong muscles and helps us to grow.



All Fall Down

This is a game of indoor bowling. Bowling can build fine motor skills and teach kids how to follow directions.

What you need:

Bowling pins, toilet paper rolls or paper towel rolls cut in half

Fish stickers (optional)

Tennis ball or any small soft ball

What to do:

Gather bowling pins, or 10 toilet paper rolls, or cut paper towel rolls in half. Decorate the pins with fish stickers or simply draw fish on them. Arrange the pins on the floor or on a low table. One at a time, have a child roll the ball to knock the pins down. Count how many pins fell down and how many are still standing. You can end the game here or continue and have the child try to knock the rest down.

Game tips: Practice rolling the ball back and forth to each other to show the children how to keep the ball on the floor. This game works best on hard floors. Throughout the game, continue to talk about protein and how fish is a protein.

Skating Fun

On a carpeted area, clear some space to make a “skating rink.” Give each child two pieces of paper (8 ½” x 11”), and put one piece under each foot. With shoes on, ask the children to stride forward and backwards as if they were skating. Have skating races, create a path to follow, or skate to music.

Favorite Fruit Poem

Bananas are my favorite fruit,
I eat one every day.
I always take one with me,
When I go out to play.
It gives me lots of energy,
To jump around and run.
Bananas are my favorite fruit.
To me they're so much fun!

(Make fists as if holding banana)
(Hold up one finger)
(Pretend to put in pocket)
(Wave bye-bye)
(Make a muscle)
(Pretend to run)
(Rub tummy)



BLEND Beginnings

Grape Painting

What you need:

Water bottle caps*
Purple, green, and/or red paint
Twigs or brown yarn
Glue

What to Do:

Have the children paint the bottle cap with grape colors then use it as a stamp, making a bunch of grapes. Use twigs or brown yarn glued on top of the grapes to make the stem.

**Sponge daubers and round-shaped sponge brushes work well, too!*

Band-Aid

University of Minnesota Extension Regional Office - Stearns County Nutrition Education

What you need:

BAND-AID® type adhesive bandages (all different sizes)

What to Do:

Ask everyone to look for a scratch or a bruise. Give each child a bandage to cover it. Tell the children that the BAND-AID® helps the outside and Vitamin C (fruits and vegetables) heals the inside.

Super Stretch

Sesame Street Workshop

It feels great to stretch! Stretching keeps us flexible, which means we're able to move and bend our bodies easily.

What to do:

Ask the children to pretend they are waking up in the morning or getting out of a car after a long ride. Ask them "How does your body feel?" Now, ask the children to pretend they are waking up or getting out of a car and do stretches! Now ask, "How does your body feel right now?" Tell the children that stretching is good for their bodies!

Wake up your body with simple warm-up exercises like these:

Run or jump in place

Stretch UP! (reach to the ceiling)

Stretch DOWN! (reach for your toes)

Stretch all AROUND! (hold your arms out to the sides and move them around slowly in big circles)

Again, ask the children "How do you feel?"



Bean Bag Bonanza

Ask the children to start balancing a bean bag (or similar sized item such as a stuffed animal or pillow) on their head. Ask them to walk around the room. Move the bean bag to various body parts such as the elbow, shoulder, knee, foot, etc.

I Like Veggies

Talk about the many vegetables that we eat. Sing the following song to the tune of "Are You Sleeping?" Change the vegetables to make your own song!

**I like veggies, I like veggies.
Do you too? Do you too?
I like corn and carrots, I like corn and carrots.
And peas too! And peas too!**

Shaken Confetti Vegetables

What you need:

Paper (blue, red, green, yellow, purple and orange)
Glue
Garbage bag
Paint brush

What to do:

Talk to the children about the many colors of vegetables (use "My Healthy Foods" Picture Cards). Have all of your children rip up small pieces of paper and put them in a garbage bag. Talk about the many different kinds of vegetable there are. Have the children draw a favorite vegetable (you may need to draw or help the children draw the vegetable). Then have them cut out the shape. Next, have them cover the shape with glue using their fingers or a brush. Finally, they can put the cutout (with glue still wet) in the garbage bag and shake it. The confetti will stick to the glue and form a colorful vegetable shape



BLEND Beginnings

Basket Targets

This activity integrates nutrition education with color recognition and motor skills.

What you need:

- 6 baskets or boxes
- Socks or soft balls
- Colored paper (red, blue, green, yellow, orange, and purple)
- Vegetable pictures (gather pictures of vegetables in a variety of colors)

What to do:

Tape a square of each color to the basket/box fronts. Place the baskets against a wall. Next, take several old white socks and help children wad each into a ball. Gather pictures of a variety of vegetables and attach one picture to each sock using tape or rubber bands. One at a time, have a child look at the picture on the sock and encourage him/her to toss (under- or over-hand) the food socks into the appropriate baskets. For example, if the child grabs the “broccoli” he/she should toss the vegetable sock into the “green” basket.

Hop To It

Physical activity in young children helps early brain development and learning. Playing “Hop To It” encourages physical activity and imagination play. To start, ask the children to name animals and insects that hop and jump. Some examples of animals and insects include: grasshopper, kangaroo, frog, and rabbit.

Once the children name some animals and insects – explain to the children that animals and insect like fruits and vegetables, too. Talk about how animals and insects need good foods to help them hop and jump. Name an animal or insect and have the children show you how they hop and jump. Below are some examples of the food that hopping animals and insects eat:

Rabbits like apples, raspberries, and kiwi.

Deer like apples, melons (watermelon, cantaloupe, etc.), berries, peaches and many vegetables.

Kangaroos like grasses (like lettuce for people)

Grasshoppers like green grass and vegetables in the garden like carrots, lettuce and broccoli

Frogs like crickets, flies, and worms... YUCK!



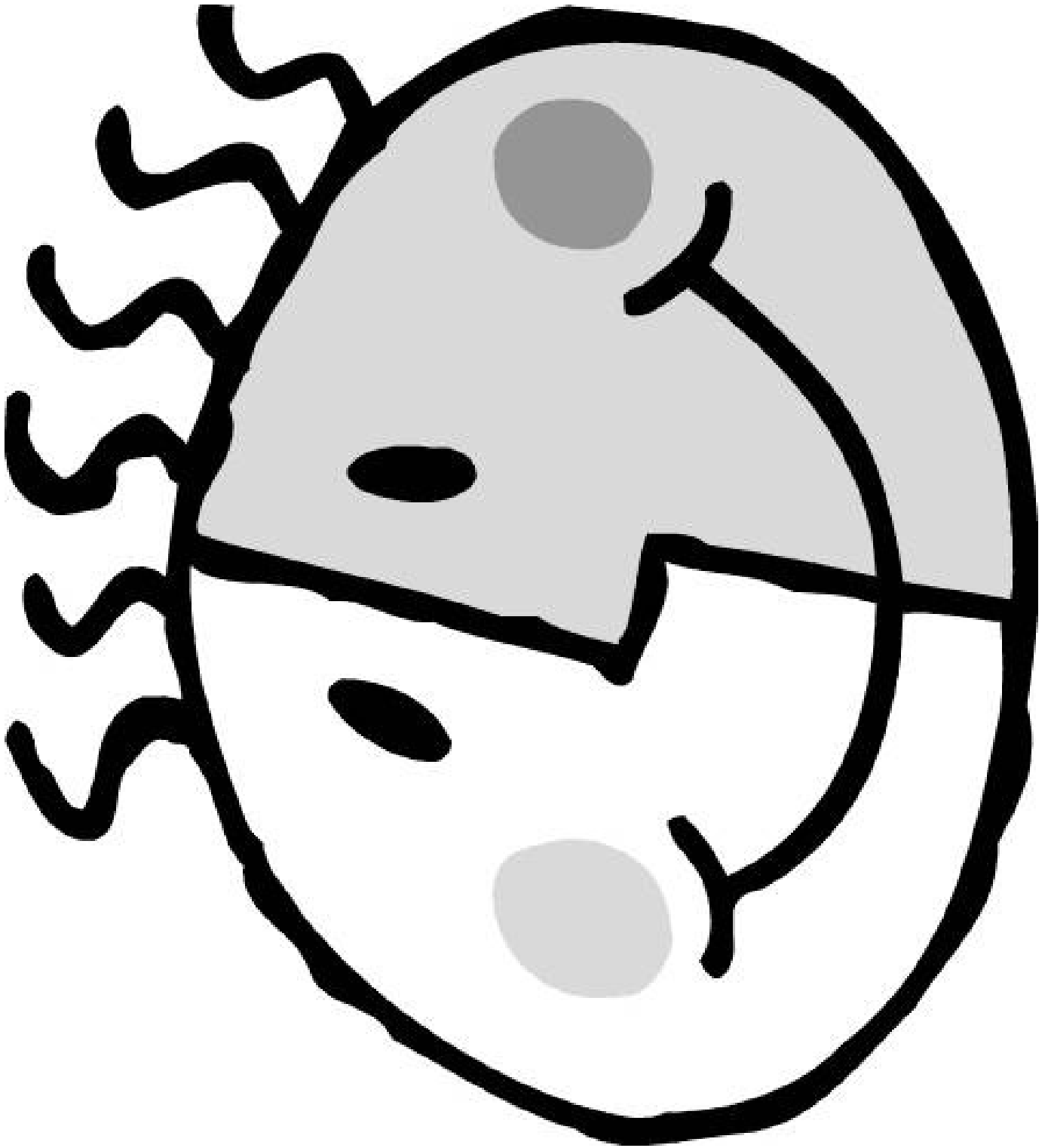
My Healthy Foods: BLEND's Healthy Foods



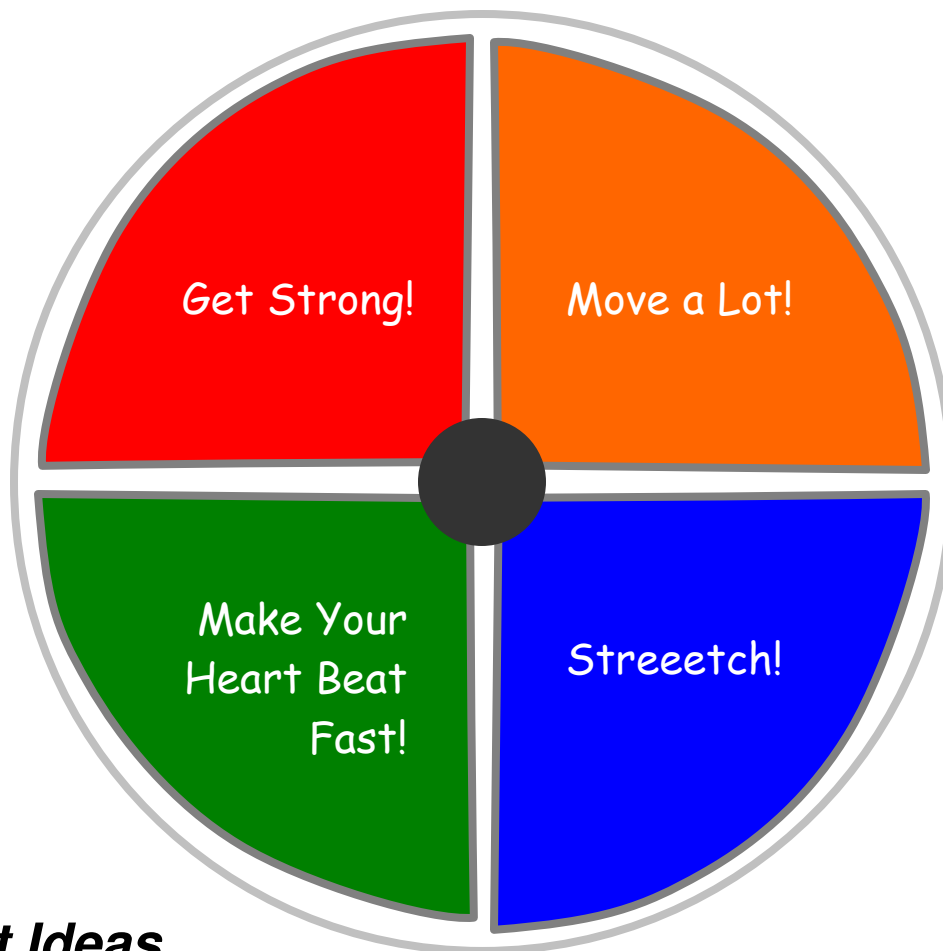
BLEND Beginnings

Starting Early, Starting Healthy

My Healthy Foods: **Rice Art**



My Healthy Foods: Activity Spinner



Movement Ideas

Red: Get Strong!

Arms: Push-ups (with knees touching ground) · Crab walk

Legs: Knee bends · Walking on tiptoes

Abdomen: Row, row, row your boat

Orange: Move a Lot!

Nature Hike · Cleanup (chores) · Parade · Follow the leader · Simon says

Blue: Streeetch!

Shoulders: Roll shoulders front and back

Arms: Clasp hands and reach front, back, and overhand

Hands and wrists: Close hand in fist, open hand, and spread fingers

Legs: Touch toes · Feet: Point and flex

Back: Sit and twist · Cat stretch

Green: Make Your Heart Beat Fast!

Tag · Jumping jacks · Outdoor play · Dancing · Soccer

My Healthy Foods: “Fishy, Fishy in the Sea!” Activity

