

Session overview

The aim of this session is to explore different food and drinks, and the nutrients they provide.

There are three main topics in this session. All content in this session aligns with the Australian Dietary Guidelines (NHMRC, 2013).

1 The five food groups

Teaching objective: To describe the five food groups and the benefits of eating a variety of foods.

By the end of this topic, participants will understand:

- The five food groups and the foods that belong to each.
- The different purposes of food other than nutrition.
- The benefits of eating a variety of foods.

Summary of key learnings

- Participants learn that all foods have a purpose and no foods are forbidden. The nutrition advice provided minimises language that may reinforce poor self-worth and contribute to disordered eating. Language used to categorise food as 'good', 'bad', 'everyday', 'sometimes', 'healthy', 'unhealthy' or 'junk' is avoided. Unhelpful language or phrases that associate food with guilt such as 'avoiding temptation' is also discouraged.
- Participants are introduced to the five food groups, common food sources and the benefits they provide including; grains (cereals), vegetables, fruit, dairy, meat and alternatives (protein), in small amounts (unsaturated fats and oils), and sometimes and in small amounts (discretionary foods and drinks).
- Participants are encouraged to eat nutrient-dense foods and drinks from the five food groups most often, and processed food and drinks with added fat, sugar and salt less often. However, we reinforce this doesn't need to be perfect at every mealtime, every day. How it averages out in the long term is more important. We promote the benefits of eating well for overall health, rather than for weight loss or change to physical appearance.
- Activities and discussions promote the idea of 'eating the rainbow' and encourage participants to make conscious choices to include a variety of foods from the five food groups in their diet.

2 Drinks

Teaching objective: To describe the different types of drinks and how to keep hydrated.

By the end of this topic, participants will understand:

- The different types of drinks and the ones to have most often to stay hydrated.
- How to work out if they're drinking enough water.
- Ways to drink more water.

Summary of key learnings

- Participants learn about the different types of drinks and which ones to have most often to stay hydrated. In doing so, there is a particular focus on the importance of water as the best choice of drink.
- Participants are encouraged to reflect on their own water intake habits compared to the recommended daily intake for their age as outlined by the Nutrient Reference Values (NHMRC, 2006).
- Strategies and tools are provided to help participants increase their water intake, ultimately encouraging them to identify strategies that will fit within their routine and lifestyle.
- Participants learn about the role of milk (or calcium fortified alternative) for bone and dental health, and the importance of consuming whole fruit for better fibre intake, instead of large amounts of fruit juice.
- Participants also learn about sugary drinks (soft drinks and cordials), diet or 'sugar free' drinks, caffeinated drinks and alcoholic drinks. The session provides insights into their composition, potential effects on health if consumed in large quantities over a long period of time and appropriate consumption guidelines.

3 Fat, sugar and salt

Teaching objective: To describe the different type of fats, sugar and salt and the common food sources of each.

By the end of this topic, participants will understand:

- The different types of fats, common food sources and ways to eat fats in small amounts each day.
- The different types of sugars, common food sources and ways to eat more naturally occurring sugars.
- Which foods are high in salt, what happens if we eat too much salt, and ways to eat less salt.

Summary of key learnings

- Participants learn about the overall importance of consuming fats for overall health and wellbeing in small amounts each day.
- Two main types of fats are introduced; unsaturated and saturated (and trans). Participants learn about which foods contain each type of fat and how to make conscious choices to consume unsaturated fats more often.
- Practical strategies and food swaps are presented to encourage participants to consume more unsaturated fat and less saturated fat such as using unsaturated cooking oils, adding avocado or unsalted nuts to meals, and opting for lean cuts of meat and poultry.
- Participants are introduced to the concept of naturally occurring and added sugars. Like fats, the types of sugar, common food sources and potential impact on health from the different types of sugars is discussed.
- Participants are encouraged to consume naturally occurring sugars from food like fruit and dairy, more often than added sugars from processed foods. They are presented with strategies and ideas for food swaps to decrease their dietary intake of added sugar.

- Participants learn about the long term health effects of excessive salt intake including high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke later in life.
- Common salty foods are identified such as potato chips, processed meats, and tinned foods. Strategies are provided for reducing salt intake including using herbs and spices to flavour foods instead of salt, choosing salt-reduced products and using less salt in cooking.

3 Put this into practice

Below is a list of suggested SMART goals that participants may choose to work on after completing this session.

Coaches should introduce these SMART goals to participants in the coaching session, or once all education activities and discussions are complete. Participants are encouraged to choose 2 – 3 goals to work on at a time. Coaches should guide participants to select a balance of activity and nutrition goals. Goals can be adapted to be easier or harder, so they are suitable for each participant.

SMART Goal suggestions

- Serve vegetables in at least 3 meals or snacks each day, this week.
- Have fruit as a snack every day this week.
- Serve grain foods like wholemeal bread, crackers, rice and pasta every day this week
- Swap white grain foods with wholemeal or brown options where possible, this week.
- Serve protein (lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans) every day this week.
- Serve (milk, yoghurt, cheese or alternatives, mostly reduced fat) every day this week.
- Serve wholegrain breakfast cereal e.g. weetbix or oats, every day this week.
- Cook with vegetable oils instead of butter or lard, every day this week.
- Drink the recommended amount of water (based on age) every day this week.
- Serve oily fish (tuna, salmon, mackerel) 2 – 3 times this week.
- Swap a food or drink with added sugars for a food or drink with naturally occurring sugars this week.
- Swap a food or drink with saturated fat for a food or drink with unsaturated fat.
- Use herbs and spices instead of salt in cooking every day this week.
- Serve a glass of water with each meal and snack, every day this week.

Key references:

National Health and Medical Research Council (2013). Australian Dietary Guidelines. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council. https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-09/n55a_australian_dietary_guidelines_summary_131014_1.pdf

National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) (2006). Nutrient reference values for Australia and New Zealand. <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/images/nutrient-reference-dietary-intakes.pdf>