

Volunteer Leader Training Guide

Using MyPyramid to Develop a Personal Eating Plan

Rosemary Rodibaugh, Ph.D., R.D., L.D., Professor - Nutrition Specialist

Introduction

Americans are overwhelmed with the latest studies or findings on what to eat, what not to eat and how much physical activity to get. Are these studies trustworthy? How do you know what to do or where to start?

Small, simple steps can often prevent or control chronic health problems such as diabetes, obesity, cancer and heart disease. Prevention includes healthy eating habits and regular physical activity. Top scientists and health experts from around the country studied the science, determined what works when it comes to nutrition and physical activity and developed the latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans. To help us incorporate the guidelines into our lives, USDA developed MyPyramid – Steps to a Healthier You.

MyPyramid symbolizes a personalized approach to healthy eating and physical activity. The graphic symbolizes activity; moderation, proportionality and variety in the diet; and gradual improvement for individuals – all important components of overall health.

Target Audience

- EHC members and other adults

Objectives

- Participants will know where to find MyPyramid information on healthy eating.
- Participants will access the MyPyramid website.
- Participants will build a personal eating plan based on MyPyramid.

Main Teaching Points

- There are many benefits to improving our health. The MyPyramid is a step-by-step guide to healthful eating and physical activity.
- The amount of calories and, therefore, food a healthy individual needs is based on age, gender and activity level.
- We need a variety of foods from each food group in order to get all the nutrients we need for good health.

Suggestions for Teaching

Prior to teaching the lesson, review the introduction and main teaching points and study the handouts. Make copies of handouts and evaluation form. Visit the MyPyramid website (<http://www.mypyramid.gov>) and become familiar with the information available on the site.

Outline for teaching the lesson:

Introduce the program by asking if participants know how many calories they should have in a day? Then mention that the amount of food they need from each food group depends on how many calories they need each day, and calorie need depends on age, gender and activity level.

Tell participants that the science-based advice of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans can help them make smart choices from every food group, get the most nutrition out of their calories and find a balance between food and physical activity. USDA's food guidance system (MyPyramid) was developed to carry the messages of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and to make Americans aware of the important health benefits of small and simple improvements in nutrition, physical activity and lifestyle behavior. It is a personalized approach designed to remind us to make healthy food choices and be active every day.

Before you can plan where you want to go with your healthy lifestyle, you need to know what the nutrition recommendations are for you and assess where you currently are.

Give each participant the **Using MyPyramid in Your Life** handout. Walk participants through Step 1, and have everyone estimate their daily calorie need. Next, have participants use the My Eating Plan Chart in the handout to determine how much food to eat from each of the food groups. Discuss the information provided for each food group including what counts as a cup of fruits, vegetables and milk and what counts as an ounce equivalent of grains and meat and beans.

Next, give each participant a copy of the **Meal Planning Worksheet**. Have them fill in the number of servings from each food group they should have each day in the upper corner box. Instruct participants to take a few minutes to plan their daily meals and snacks for a typical day using the worksheet. Ask participants to total the number of cups and ounces they plan to eat to see if their plan meets the recommendations for their calorie level. Tell participants they can use the format for regularly planning meals and snacks.

Give each participant a copy of the **MyPyramid Worksheet** to track what they eat for the next day. They should enter their food group goals in the goal column and write in the foods and beverages they consume as they eat or drink them. At the end of the day, they can compare what they consumed to their MyPyramid goals for their calorie level. After seeing how they did, they can set food and activity goals for tomorrow.

Tell participants they can find a wealth of information on the MyPyramid.gov website. Give each participant a copy of the **MyPyramid Serving Equivalents** handout and tell them they can find more information like this to help them with their personal healthy lifestyle plan on the MyPyramid.gov website.

Ask participants to complete the **Program Evaluation** form.

Handouts

- Using MyPyramid in Your Life
- Meal Planning Worksheet
- MyPyramid Worksheet
- MyPyramid Serving Equivalents Guide
- Program Evaluation