

Nutrition Education Competencies for Preschool Children

Center for Nutrition in Schools
Department of Nutrition
University of California, Davis

Project Funded by the California Department of Education, Nutrition Services Division
September 2009

Nutrition Competency I:

Students will know and understand the relationship between the human body, nutrition and energy balance.

Pre-Kindergarten

(A) Know the six nutrient groups and their functions

Name, show, or point to foods that are favorites to eat.

Name a variety of foods and, with assistance, describe them using senses (taste, touch, sight, smell, and sound) This might include using a variety of terms such as size, color, shape, texture, and flavor.

Show ability to differentiate or sort between common edible and non-edible items (e.g., cheese and soap). Identify foods as being of plant or animal origin.

Count the six different nutrient groups (Grains, proteins, dairy, fruits, vegetables, and fats/oils).

Say or recognize that food is eaten every day to stay healthy, grow, and to give energy.

(B) Describe how nutritional needs vary throughout the life cycle

Point or show which foods babies might eat compared to foods preschoolers or adults might eat.

Nutrition Competency I (Continued):

Students will know and understand the relationship between the human body, nutrition and energy balance.

(C) Know the physiology of the human body as it relates to nutrition and physical activity

Explain, with prompting, that we need healthy food to maintain healthy bodies (in response to being asked).

Show two ways to move your body (e.g., skipping, running, stretching, jumping).

Show or describe how it feels to move your body.

Say that our bodies need energy which we obtain from food.

Recognize, draw, or say that plants and animals need food and water for energy and growth.

Nutrition Competency II:

Students will know current nutrition and physical activity recommendations and how to apply them.

Pre-Kindergarten

(A) Know nutrition guidelines

Say or agree that people should eat a variety of foods every day.

Say or show that there are a wide variety of foods that can be divided into different food groups.

Name or show the foods in a simple recipe or food item (e.g., Cheese Sandwich).

Identify, show, point to or sequence foods or food pictures into smallest, larger, and largest sizes.

Identify the tools used to measure servings of food and understand that some are small and some are big.

(B) Assess personal dietary needs

Communicate clearly when hungry or full.

Discuss or show their daily routine for eating.

Name or point to typical foods eaten with the family at different mealtimes and recognize that some families eat different foods.

Recognize that some people have dietary restrictions (e.g., food allergies or religious).

Nutrition Competency II: (continued)

Students will know current nutrition and physical activity recommendations and how to apply them.

(C) Understand the influence of nutrition on health

Say, with prompting, that eating a variety of foods is good for the body.

Say that different kinds of foods from each food group should be eaten to maintain a healthy body.

Pre-Kindergarten

(D) Assess the relationship of physical activity and nutrition to health

Show some activities in which you move your body a lot and some in which you don't move your body much.

Explain how when you move your body you need extra energy.

Understand that our bodies need a lot of sleep and rest to be healthy.

(E) Establish personal goals and make healthy food and fitness choices

Say or point to a few items that might be found in a kitchen.

Prepare a healthy snack with adult assistance or guidance.

Name or show a favorite way of playing that involves moving your body.

Demonstrate interest in trying a variety of new foods.

Nutrition Competency III:
Students will identify and explore factors influencing food choices.

Pre-Kindergarten

(A) Identify influences on food choices

Name or show a favorite food and say why.

Describe what characteristics of food (e.g. colorful, crunchy, etc) make that food desirable to eat.

Recall and describe, when prompted, mealtime and say what they remembered feeling.

Explain that special foods are served on a special occasion, holiday or as part of a favorite food custom or name some special foods served on special days.

Recognize or show that plants and trees have different parts that provide food.

Recognize that different cultures may eat different foods.

Demonstrate the ability and/or interest in feeding themselves and making healthy choices.

(B) Explore factors that contribute to achieving and maintaining a healthy body and positive body image

Recognize or show that people come in different sizes and body shapes.

Recognize or show that physical activity is good for the body.

Nutrition Competency IV:

Students will demonstrate proper food handling and storage to maximize the nutritional quality of food and personal hygiene to prevent food borne illness.

Pre-Kindergarten

Describe or show a place where people prepare food.

Say or agree when asked that children need to have adults with them for safety when they prepare food.

Say or agree when asked that adults need to decide which tools are safe for children to use when preparing foods.

Name one or more ways to prepare food for eating.

Demonstrate proper hand washing technique, with adult support, before food handling and eating and say why.

Name or point to places where foods are stored (e.g., refrigerator, cupboard, freezer, cans).

Identify foods or behaviors that can lead to choking hazards (e.g. walking or talking while eating).

Nutrition Competency V:

Students will identify valid nutrition information and advocate for positive health policies and practices.

Pre-Kindergarten

(A) Access valid nutrition information and nutrition services

Discuss, with guidance, how not all information in the media such as food advertisements or television programs is necessarily true.

(B) Advocate for positive health policy and practices

Participate in activities with adults that help show others that health is important, such as showing parents healthy foods they tried in child care that they would like to try at home.

Nutrition Competency VI:

Students will identify and explore influences of local, national and global factors on the quantity and quality of food.

Pre-Kindergarten

(A) Identify foods that come from particular regions

Say that some foods are grown in different places, such as bananas only grow in specific parts of the world.

(B) Understand the factors (local, regional, statewide, national, global) that influence food availability, production and consumption

Say or notice that foods or plants grow better when it is warmer or if there is water (e.g., a cactus will grow most successfully in the desert).

Nutrition Competency VII:

Students will identify and explore a variety of food-related careers.

Pre-Kindergarten

Say that many people help to bring food to the table. With prompting, identify, match, or show the roles of farmers, truck drivers who transport food, storekeepers, and family members and others who help provide food.

Generally describe the roles of health care professionals (registered dietitians or doctors) as helpers in nutrition or health.