

FUEL UP!

A Nutrition Workshop for Youth • Ages 11–18

Name	Grade / Group	Date

What This Workshop Is About

Food is fuel, culture, comfort and fun — not a test you can fail.

In the next hour we will look at what food actually does inside your body, how to build a plate that keeps your energy steady, and how to make snack and drink choices that feel good and taste good. No food is banned here and nobody is weighed, measured, or judged.

By the end you will be able to:

- Name the five food groups and what each one does for you
- Build a balanced plate for a real meal you eat
- Read a food label for sugar, fiber and portion size
- Swap one snack or drink for something that fuels you longer
- Set one small nutrition goal for the week ahead

Facilitator Agenda — 60 Minutes

Adapt timings for a 45- or 90-minute session.

Time	Segment	What happens
0–05	Welcome & agreements	Food-mood check-in: “What did you eat today that you liked?”
05–15	Food as fuel	Page 2 — five food groups, energy, hydration.
15–30	Build Your Plate	Activity 1 — draw a real meal on the plate (page 3).
30–40	Label detective	Activity 2 — sugar math and label reading (page 4).
40–50	Snack swap & rainbow	Activity 3 & 4 — swaps, color challenge, coloring (page 4–5).
50–60	Goal + reflection	Activity 5 — goal setting and journal (page 5).

Group Agreements

1. No “good” or “bad” foods — and no comments about anyone’s body or lunch. 2. Everyone’s culture and family food counts. 3. You can pass on any question. 4. What is shared here stays here.

Food Is Fuel: What Each Group Actually Does

● Fruits & Vegetables Vitamins, fiber and water. They help your immune system, your skin and your digestion. Aim to fill half your plate.	● Grains (carbs) Your brain's main fuel. Whole grains — oats, brown rice, whole-wheat bread — release energy slowly so you do not crash.
● Protein Beans, eggs, chicken, fish, tofu, nuts, yogurt. Builds muscle, repairs your body and keeps you full between classes.	● Dairy or alternatives Milk, yogurt, cheese, fortified soy. Calcium builds the bones you will use for the rest of your life — teen years matter most.
● Healthy fats Avocado, olive oil, nuts, seeds, fish. Your brain is about 60% fat — it needs these to focus and to steady your mood.	● Water 6–8 glasses a day, more if you play sports. Being a little dehydrated feels like tiredness, headaches and bad focus.

Energy Steady vs. Energy Crash

Why you feel great after some meals and wrecked after others.

Steady fuel — lasts hours • Carb + protein together (apple + peanut butter) • Whole grains instead of white • Breakfast, even a small one • Water with your meal	Quick spike — then a crash • Energy drinks and soda on an empty stomach • Candy alone as a whole snack • Skipping meals then overeating later • Nothing but coffee before school
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Myth Busting

“Carbs make you gain weight.” Carbs are your brain's fuel. Growing bodies need them.

“Skipping meals saves calories.” It usually means less focus, worse mood, and more eating later.

“Some foods are bad.” Foods have different jobs. Cake at a birthday is doing its job just fine.

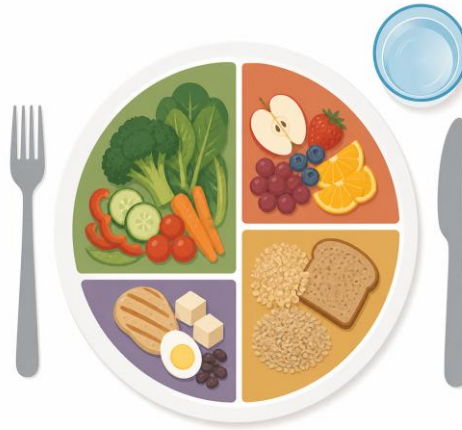
“If it says ‘natural’ it is healthy.” “Natural” is a marketing word. Read the label instead.

Quick write: one thing from this page that surprised me, and one thing I already do well —

Activity 1: Build Your Plate

15 minutes • draw, label or list — whatever works for you.

Use the balanced plate below as your guide, then write or sketch a meal you actually eat at home or at school into the lines underneath. Check it against the guide: half fruit and vegetables, a quarter grains, a quarter protein, plus a drink — and note anything that is missing.



Half the plate

Fruits & vegetables

One quarter

Grains — go whole when you can

One quarter

Protein

In the glass

Water or milk first

My meal is: _____

What it is already doing well, and one thing I could add:

Activity 2: Label Detective

10 minutes • bring real packages, or use the examples below.

Grab a snack package (or use the numbers your facilitator reads out) and fill in the card. Remember: 4 grams of sugar = about 1 teaspoon.

Snack or drink #1	Snack or drink #2	Snack or drink #3
Name: _____	Name: _____	Name: _____
Serving size: _____	Serving size: _____	Serving size: _____
Sugar (g): _____	Sugar (g): _____	Sugar (g): _____
= _____ teaspoons	= _____ teaspoons	= _____ teaspoons
Fiber (g): _____	Fiber (g): _____	Fiber (g): _____
Protein (g): _____	Protein (g): _____	Protein (g): _____

Sugar reality check: one 20 oz bottle of soda holds about 65 g of sugar — roughly 16 teaspoons. The daily suggested limit of added sugar for teens is about 25 g (6 teaspoons).

Activity 3: Snack Swap Lab

10 minutes • work in pairs and invent your own swaps.

Instead of...	Try...	Because...
Chips on their own	Chips + cheese stick or hummus	Protein makes it last until dinner
Energy drink	Cold water + a piece of fruit	Real energy, no 3 p.m. crash
Candy after school	Trail mix or yogurt + berries	Sweet, but with fiber and protein
Nothing (skipping breakfast)	Toast + peanut butter, or a banana	Your first two classes will thank you
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Activity 4: Eat the Rainbow Challenge

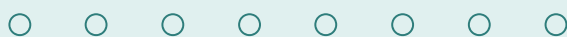
Different colors do different jobs — track yours for one week.



Different colors carry different nutrients. Tick a box each day you eat something from that color group — aim for at least three colors a day.

Color	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Red (tomato, berries)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Orange / yellow (carrot, mango)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Green (spinach, broccoli, kiwi)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Purple / blue (grapes, eggplant)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
White / brown (banana, beans, oats)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Hydration tracker — fill in a glass each time you drink water today



Tip: keep a bottle in your bag and refill it between classes. Add lemon, mint or frozen fruit if plain water is boring.

Activity 5: My One Small Goal

Small and specific beats big and vague.

Pick one thing you will actually do this week. Circle a starter goal or write your own.

Eat breakfast 3 mornings	Water instead of soda once a day	Add a vegetable to dinner
Try one new fruit	Pack a snack with protein	Help cook one meal at home

My goal this week: _____

When and where: _____

Who can help me: _____

Activity 6: Journal Reflection

Take five quiet minutes. Nobody has to read this but you.

Choose a prompt: *How did I feel in my body today, and what had I eaten?* • *What does food mean in my family or culture?* • *Where do my ideas about food and bodies come from — friends, family, social media?* • *What is one kind thing I can say to my body this week?*

Facilitator Tip

Keep the focus on energy, mood and fueling — never on weight, dieting or calorie counting. If a young person raises food restriction, bingeing, or body distress, follow up privately and connect them with the school counselor or nurse.

Need Support?

School counselor or nurse: _____

NEDA Helpline: 1-800-931-2237 (eating concerns)

This handout is general education, not medical or dietary advice. Young people with allergies, diabetes, or other medical or nutrition needs should follow the plan from their doctor or dietitian.