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Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County  
Department of Family Medicine at Stony Brook Medical Center

Funded by:  
The New York State Department of Health, Mary Lasker Heart and  
Hypertension Institute

## NUTRITION UNIT

### 6TH GRADE

#### LESSON 5 - BUILDING PYRAMIDS

##### OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to apply the information discussed in lessons 1-4, to compare given diets to the recommendations put forth by the Food Guide Pyramid.
- Students will be able to evaluate their own diets using the Food Guide Pyramid.

##### MATERIALS NEEDED

Provided in the Curriculum:

Mr. Couch Potato's Diet and Mr. Fit's Diet  
What I ate Yesterday

Other:

cardboard, wood or cloth blocks (optional)

*The Blue Waves Heart Links Project*

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## REVIEW

Ask students to list the food groups in the Food Guide Pyramid and write the foods groups on the board. For each food group, ask students how many servings should they have from each food group each day. Ask students what a serving size is equal to for each group. (Grain Group 6-11 serving a day, one serving = 1 slice of bread, 1/2 cup of cooked cereal, rice or pasta or one ounce of cold cereal; Vegetable Group 3-5 serving a day, one serving = 1 cup of raw, leafy vegetables, 1/2 cup cooked vegetables, or 3/4 cup of vegetable juice; Fruit Group 2-4 servings per day, one serving = one medium-sized fresh fruit, 1/2 cup canned fruit and 3/4 cup fruit juice; Meat Group 2-3 servings per day, one serving = 2-3 ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry or fish, 1/2 cup of cooked dried beans, 1 egg or 2 tablespoons of peanut butter; Milk Group 3 servings per day, one serving = 1 cup of milk or yogurt, 1-1/2 ounces of natural cheese or 2 ounces of processed cheese; and the other group which includes fats and sweets and should be used sparingly. Have students name a variety of foods in each group.

Discuss with students that each food group is important because foods in each group are high in particular nutrients (for example foods in the dairy group are high in calcium, vitamin D and riboflavin - see introduction and background material from lessons 1- 4 for more information on the nutrients in each group). Foods at the base of the pyramid should be eaten in larger amounts than foods towards the top of the Pyramid.

Discuss with students that sometimes it is difficult to determine which of the food groups a food belongs to. For example, potatoes are in the vegetable group. Potato chips, however, are in the other group at the tip of the Pyramid, because they have a lot of

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fat added to them when they are cooked. Low fat baked potato chips may still be in the Tip because they are high in sodium. French fries are also a questionable food. Deep fried French fries that you get in fast food restaurants, have a lot of fat. These fries are like sponges, and they soak up oil like a sponge soaks up water. Frozen French fries that you buy in the grocery store are coated in some fat. If you bake these at home, they can be counted in the Vegetable Group, because they are not too fatty. Cakes and cookies are made from grains, like wheat flour. However, they have a lot of sugar and fat added to them, and therefore, are at the tip of the Pyramid in the Other or Fat and Sugar Group. Soda gets all of its calories from sugar, and therefore, is also in the tip of the Pyramid. Ice cream is made from milk, but it has a lot of fat and sugar added, and it is in the tip also.

## ACTIVITIES

### MR. COUCH POTATO AND MR. FIT

Have students look at the menus for Mr. Couch Potato and Mr. Fit. Ask students to fill out the Pyramid Food Group Chart, assigning each food to a food group. They should write the name of the food in one box if the diet included one serving of the food, and in two boxes if the diet included two servings of the food. For example, a half of a hamburger bun is one serving from the grain group, because it is like one slice of bread. So they would have hamburger bun written in two boxes under the Grain Group for Mr. Couch Potato's diet.

Then have students try to build the Pyramids represented by the diets using blocks or draw them on the black board drawing equal sized boxes for each serving from each

food group. See answer sheets attached. Explain to students that Mr. Couch Potato's diet is making him feel sluggish and down, whereas Mr. Fit's diet is giving him energy to stay active, play and participate in sports.

#### BUILDING MY PYRAMID

Have students fill out the worksheet, Foods I Ate Yesterday. They should circle all the foods and drinks they had yesterday. If they had something to eat or drink that is not on the list of foods in each group, they can write it in under "other" at the bottom of each list for each food group. The lists are to help students remember foods they ate. Each circle represents one serving of that food. If they ate 2 or 3 servings they should circle it two or three times. On the back of the worksheet, students should draw the Pyramid represented by their diet.

#### CONCLUSIONS

- Students need to consider the fat, sugar and sodium content of foods, as well as their main ingredient, before assigning a food to a food group or the tip of the Food Pyramid.
- Some high fat and high sugar foods may be acceptable for students, if they have enough servings from the first two levels of the Pyramids to support them.