

NUTRITION EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

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The Dietetic Section of the Department of Agricultural Technical Services gives talks on food and sound eating habits to as many school children as possible in the four Provinces of the Republic. Each school in a chosen area is visited twice within 12 months and each time a short talk and film show are given.

The dietitians also try to reach the parents in the same area through the Parent-Teachers Association and other organized groups. They are encouraged to arrange for a series of talks on nutrition in order to give the mothers a working knowledge of sound food habits.

Of all the school children, the very young groups (the grades and Std. I) are the most impressionable and receptive.

The following talk is an example of how the grades in White schools are taught the basic rules of good nutrition:

Sound Eating Habits

This morning we are going to talk about the food we eat every day.

We all like to eat, don't we? When I think of an orange or a sandwich or a nice piece of meat, my mouth waters; and yours?

What happens if we don't eat? Yes, we become weak and after a while we will die. It is therefore very necessary that we eat.

Not only is it important that we eat, it is also important that we eat the right kinds of food. You all have pets, I am sure. You know that if you don't give them the right food they become listless and ill and they may even die. A kitten or puppy needs milk and meat in order to grow and be healthy; a budgie needs bird seed and lettuce and water.

Let me tell you what happened to me, just a month ago. I found a hedgehog in my garden, and I wanted to keep it as a pet. We put it in a cage and gave it some oats, lettuce and water. But it would not eat. We gave it bread and milk but it wouldn't eat. It was very miserable, and it was becoming very weak.

In desperation I phoned the people at the zoo, and they said I had been giving that poor animal the wrong kind of food. I should have given it meat and insects.

If it is important that *animals* should eat the right kinds of food to grow and to be healthy and lively, surely *we* should also be careful to eat the right kind of food which will help us to be strong and healthy.

Now you will probably say: 'But teacher, I'm too small to remember about all the foods'. I'm going to show you today that it is not difficult to remember the foods we need to make us strong and healthy.

Can you count up to five? Yes, of course you can. Well, it is as easy as counting on the 5 fingers of your one hand, to remember the foods which we need to make us strong and healthy.

(Picture of hand is put on flannel graph and pictures of foods.)

1. When you look at your *small finger* it should remind you to eat brown bread and butter every day. Margarine is good too in place of butter. Remember, *brown* bread is better than white bread. We are talking about the foods which help to make us strong and healthy.

Try to bring brown bread sandwiches to school every day. Soon you will notice that you prefer brown bread to white bread.

2. The *second finger* should remind you to drink milk every day. Why do you think milk is important? It helps to make your teeth and bones strong. See how strong my teeth are, and I am quite old. One day, when you are as old as I am, you should still have your own teeth. Look after them well, because they have to work hard for you.

I know of children who won't drink milk because they think milk is good only for babies. They are very wrong, because people of all ages need milk, your *grandma* and *grandpa* too.

3. The *middle finger* usually does not forget to remind us to eat meat or eggs because we are very fond of these foods. That is good, because they will help us to grow and to have strong muscles.

4. The *next finger* is a naughty little finger, because it usually forgets to remind us to eat these foods. (*Pictures of vegetables are put on flannel graph.*) What are they? *Vegetables*.

Remember, if you want to keep healthy and enjoy life, you should eat vegetables every day. Don't you like raw carrots? Ask mummy to give you your carrots raw instead of cooking them.

5. The *thumb* should remind you to eat fruit every day. I know some children who would rather eat sweets and drink cold drinks every day than eat some fruit.

Don't forget that we are still busy discussing the foods which help to make us strong and healthy. Fruit is good for us, but sweets and cold drinks should be used *very carefully*, and should not take the place of milk, vegetables and fruit.

If you *do* eat sweets and drink a cold drink, have them *after* a meal, *not* before, because they will spoil your appetite and you will then not eat the food which helps you to be strong and healthy.

Now, repeat after me: bread and butter, milk, meat and eggs, vegetables, fruit. Repeat a second time.

It is not difficult to remember these foods, is it? I am sure you will never forget them. Do you know that they are our *good friends*? They are our friends because they help us to grow, to be strong and healthy.

After this talk a suitable film is shown and each child is given the pamphlet 'Food for little ones' to take home.