







Healthful Eating

Activity 20-1	What's New?	 10-15 minutes
Activity 20-2	Food as Common Ground	 15-20 minutes
Activity 20-3	Eating for Health	 40-50 minutes
Activity 20-4	Cooking for Health	 40-50 minutes
Activity 20-5	Feedback/Wrap-up	 10-15 minutes
Activity 20-6	Peer Support Group Closure	 30 minutes

Planning Note: You will need an extra 30 minutes to conduct this session, so that you can do Activity 20-6, “Peer Support Group Closure.” This activity is very important; do not leave it out. If you cannot extend the session, omit Activity 20-5, “Feedback/Wrap-up.”

Key Concepts

- Food often expresses our cultural heritage. What we eat tells a story about our family of origin, and how we use food in our celebrations and daily life helps us identify with our groups.
- No single food has all the nutrients we need to stay healthy. It is important to eat a variety of healthful foods every day.
- A balanced, healthful diet includes servings from the five major food groups every day (see the handout “The Food Pyramid”). It is based on more servings of grains, vegetables, and fruits than of dairy and meat products. Sweets, fats, and oils play the smallest role in daily nutrition.
- We can reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers by watching our weight, exercising, and avoiding foods that are high in calories, fat, cholesterol, and salt.
- Water is essential to healthful living, especially for children. Adults drink about six cups of water in beverages every day and get about four more cups of water from food.
- Alcoholic beverages (and many sweet drinks other than juices) are high in calories but low in nutrition. An adult should have no more than one or two alcoholic drinks a day.

Materials Checklist

Activity 20-2 Food as Common Ground

- Handout, “Food for Thought”
- Pencils (for everyone)
- Newsprint and marker

Activity 20-3 Eating for Health

- Booklets, “Making Healthy Food Choices,” “The Food Pyramid Guide,” and “Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans” *
- Handouts, “The Food Pyramid” and “Food Diary”
- Paper and pencils (for everyone)

*These and other booklets can be obtained at a nominal cost from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, 1120 20th St., NW, Suite 200, North Lobby, Washington, DC 20036-3475. Some of these materials can be found on the World Wide Web at <http://www.usda.gov/fcs/chpp.htm>

Activity 20-4 Cooking for Health

- Pictures from magazines showing a variety of foods from all five food groups
- Handouts, “The Food Pyramid” and “Food Diary”
- Paper and pencils (for everyone)

What's New?

Ask the following questions to remind the men of what they talked about in the last two sessions (if, as suggested, you divided Session 19 into two meetings).

▼ Discussion Questions

1. Will somebody please summarize what we talked about in the last session? What were the main ideas we discussed?
2. What reactions did you have to the last session? Did we talk about anything that changed your opinions about the use of alcohol or drugs? If so, how have your opinions changed?
3. Did you have any experiences this week that caused you to think about our discussion? If so, describe the situation and how it related to what we said.
4. Did you tell your partner, friends, or children what you learned about alcohol and drugs? If so, how did they respond to your information?
5. Are there people in your life whose use of alcohol or drugs is of concern to you? If so, what would you like to do about these concerns?

Say something like: “In our last two sessions, we discussed the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs. We talked about their physical and emotional effects and the health risks they raise — even when they are not abused. Well, today we’ll take one more step toward healthful living by learning about the effects and risks of various foods. Yes, even the food we eat can be dangerous to our health. Once again, information is the key to making decisions that work for us, rather than against us.”

Food as Common Ground

Purpose: To get the men talking about the role food played in their family of origin and about the role it plays in their life today.

Materials: Handout, “Food for Thought”; pencils (for everyone); newsprint and marker.

Time: 15-20 minutes.

Procedure: Begin by telling the men that this activity will get them thinking and talking about the role that food played in their life while they were growing up. The goal is to identify and share their experiences with food.

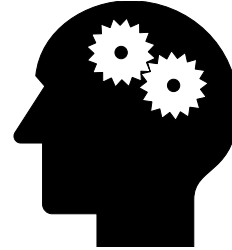
Distribute the handout “Food for Thought,” and then read its four questions aloud. Tell the men to answer all four questions on the handout, without letting anyone see their responses. When everyone has finished, collect the handouts, mix them up, and redistribute them — making sure that no one gets his own handout back.

Now tell the men to read the handout they received and to guess who made those responses. Let the men move around the room to discover the owner of the handout and return it. When everyone has his own handout and is seated again, ask the following questions (and post the answers on newsprint).

▼ Discussion Questions

1. What clues did the handout give that led you to the person who made those responses? (For example, were you “tipped off” by the favorite foods he listed? By the one food he hated to eat as a child? By the “ethnic foods” that his family ate on holidays and special occasions?)
2. Can somebody tell us about a childhood experience that was associated with food? (Try to get responses from everyone.)
3. What did you learn from this activity about other group members’ experiences with food? Did you have similar experiences as you were growing up?
4. What were the most common favorite foods listed by group members? Why do you think so many people like these foods? Are these foods important in a balanced, healthful diet?

Food for Thought



1. Name three of your favorite foods.

2. What kinds of foods did your family eat to celebrate holidays or special occasions?

3. What one food did you hate to eat as a child?

4. Name one food given to you as a child that was supposed to help you when you were sick.

Eating for Health

Purpose: To help the men think about how food affects their own and their children's health and well-being. To assist them in planning nutritious meals and educating their children about food.

Materials: Booklets, "Making Healthy Food Choices," "The Food Pyramid Guide," and "Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans";* handouts, "The Food Pyramid" and "Food Diary"; paper and pencils (for everyone).

Time: 40-50 minutes.

Procedure: Begin by asking the men to think about the last day they spent with their children. Where did they and the children eat? What foods did the children eat? Did the fathers prepare any of the food? Can they name their children's favorite foods? Which foods do their children refuse to eat? Have they talked with their children about food and nutrition?

Remind the fathers that a well-balanced diet is especially important for a child's growth and development. Make the point that many illnesses in infancy and childhood are associated with poor nutrition and that many adult illnesses begin in childhood, with poor eating habits.

As you distribute paper and pencils, ask the men to imagine that they are standing in the middle of their kitchens. If they looked in the refrigerator, pantry, and cupboards, what foods would they find right now? Tell the men to list all the foods they have on hand, and then ask for volunteers to share their lists with the group.

*These and other booklets can be obtained at a nominal cost from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. See page 20-3 for contact information.

Review the U.S. Department of Agriculture booklets “Making Healthy Food Choices” and “Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans.” Then distribute and review the handout “The Food Pyramid.” Ask the men to go back over their lists of food and to rate each item in terms of its healthfulness (1 = Very Healthful; 2 = Somewhat Healthful; 3 = Not Healthful).

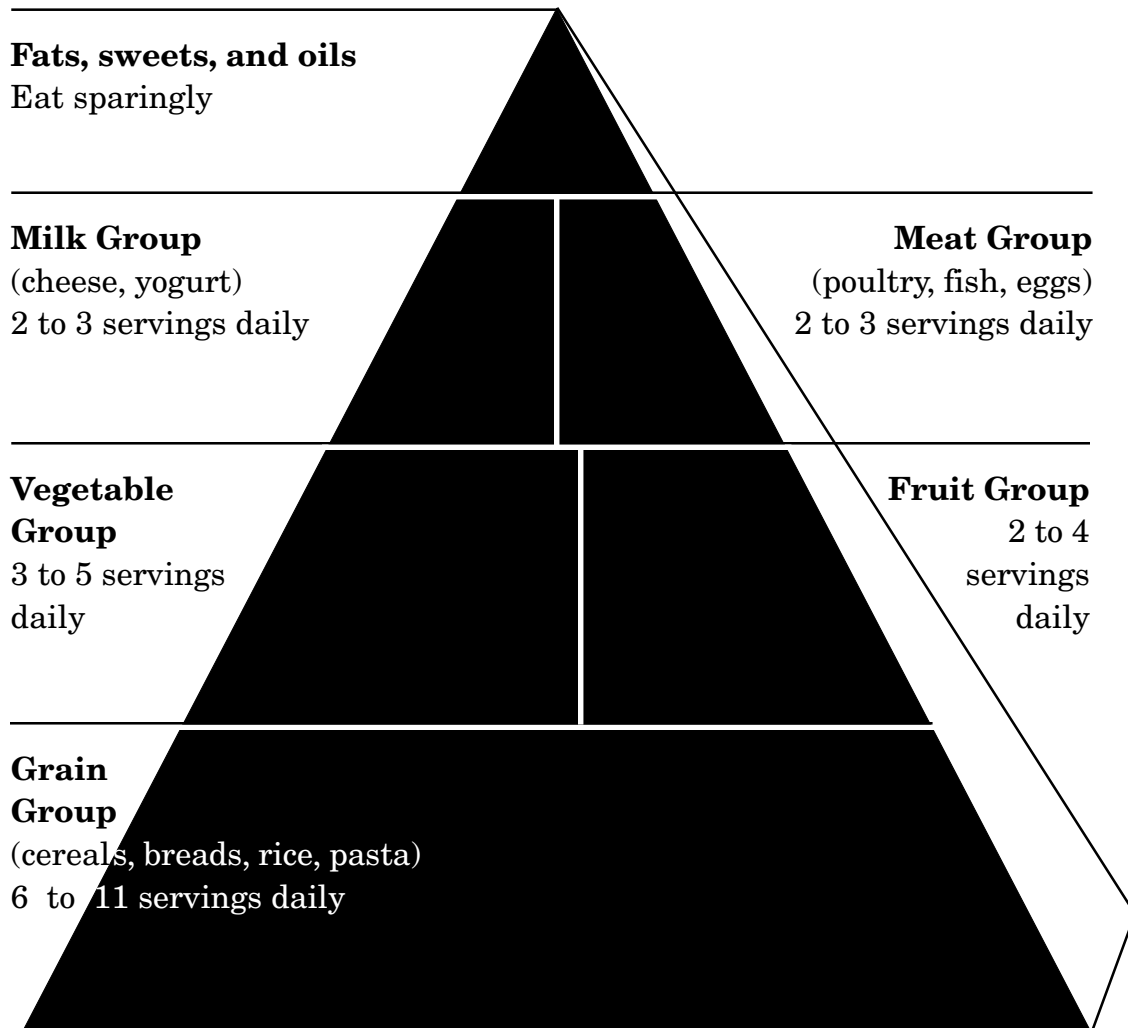
Now ask each man to consider whether the foods he has on hand would both satisfy his hunger and also give him a nutritious, well-balanced meal. If his children were visiting and wanted to eat, would he be happy to serve those foods to them? If he knew that his children were coming and would probably be hungry, what foods would he go out and buy?

Distribute the handout “Food Diary,” and ask the men to complete part A by listing everything they remember eating yesterday (or today). Then ask them to complete part B by describing how much fat they usually eat. Next, in part C, they should write how many servings from each food group they eat on a typical day. Finally, at the bottom of the handout, they should assess their current diet and make notes about how they would like to change it.

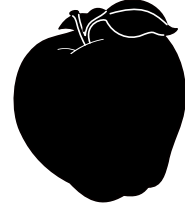
When the handouts have been completed, review the information about the food pyramid, and help the men determine whether they are eating the appropriate number of servings from each food group. If time permits, the men can repeat this exercise, focusing on their children’s diets.

The Food Pyramid

A healthful, balanced diet can be seen as a “food pyramid” that is based on more servings of grains, vegetables, and fruits than of dairy and meat products. Notice that fats, sweets, and oils play the smallest role in daily nutrition.



Food Diary



A. Please write down everything you remember eating yesterday.

Morning: _____

Afternoon: _____

Evening: _____

Night: _____

B. Write an "X" on the lines to show how much fat you eat.

	Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Every Day
Cookies, cakes, pies, donuts	_____	_____	_____
Whole milk, cheese, ice-cream	_____	_____	_____
Butter, oil, salad dressing	_____	_____	_____
Fatty meats (hotdogs, bologna, bacon)	_____	_____	_____
Fried foods	_____	_____	_____

If you put an "X" on many lines under "Every Day," you should think about ways to eat less fat. (For example, eat fruit rather than pie; drink skim or low-fat milk; use a butter substitute; and make sandwiches with lean meat, lettuce, and tomatoes.)

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C. How many servings from each food group do you usually have every day?

Sweets, fats, and oils: _____

Meat (poultry, fish, eggs): _____

Milk (cheese, yogurt): _____

Fruits: _____

Vegetables: _____

Grains (cereals, breads, rice, pasta): _____

D. What changes should you make in your diet? Which foods should you avoid?

Which foods should you add?

Cooking for Health

Purpose: To help the fathers plan a healthful meal for their children. To explore with them ways to educate their children about healthful eating.

Materials: Pictures from magazines showing a variety of foods from all five food groups; handouts, “The Food Pyramid” and “Food Diary” (see Activity 20-3); paper and pencils (for everyone).

Time: 40-50 minutes.

Planning Note: Fathers of young children (under age 7 or 8) may have to assess their children’s diets and plan a meal without the children’s help; but they still can find ways to educate their children about healthful eating. Fathers of older children should attempt to plan a meal with them, go shopping together, and prepare and eat the meal together.

Procedure: Begin by asking for a volunteer to summarize what the group has learned about healthful eating. Then ask the fathers how familiar they are with their children’s eating habits. What are their children’s favorite and least favorite foods? Which foods do they wish their children would eat regularly, and which would they like their children to avoid? Also ask whether anyone has prepared a meal for his children. If so, what did he serve, and how did he prepare it? (Was it a cold meal or a hot one? Did he use packaged foods or fresh foods? Did he fry, bake, or broil the meat?) Did the children help plan the meal and go shopping with him? Did they help prepare the meal (and clean up after it)? How did the father and children feel about this dining experience?

Distribute and review (if necessary) the handout “Food Diary.” Ask the men to complete the diary again, this time answering the questions in terms of their children’s diets. (If a father doesn’t know what his children eat, ask him to complete the diary in a way that he would *like* his children to eat.)

Next, display the pictures of foods, and together decide which food group each picture represents. (Refer to the handout “The Food Pyramid.” If you have enough space, you could have the men sort the pictures into five groups on a table or desk.) Then ask each father to plan a meal based on the pictures (or let the men work in teams). Make the point that they could do this same activity with their children; the pictures will give them a good time together and also will educate the children about nutrition.

After the men have planned a meal for their children, tell them to prepare a shopping list (again, they can work in teams). Have them organize the list according to the five food groups, to reinforce the idea of the food pyramid. Also encourage them to read product labels in the supermarket; they should compare the information about calories, fat, sugar, salt, and vitamins.

End the activity by encouraging the fathers to share today’s session with their children. Even if they can’t plan, shop for, and prepare a meal together, they can use pictures of foods and the handouts to find out what their children like to eat (“Food Diary”) and to steer them toward a better diet (“The Food Pyramid”).

Feedback/Wrap-up

Ask the following questions to discuss the men's reactions to today's session. (If time is short, consider skipping this activity and moving directly to Activity 20-6, which is more important.)

▼ Discussion Questions

1. What are your overall reactions to today's session?
2. How important is it to you to learn about healthful eating? Why is this information important to you (or not important)?
3. In what ways do you think you should adjust your eating habits? What do you eat now that you should eat less of or not eat at all? What foods would you like to add to your diet?
4. Based on what you learned today, how would you like to adjust your children's diets? How might you go about doing that?
5. In what ways would healthful eating improve the overall quality of your life? Of your children's lives?

Remind the men that healthful living depends on factors other than good nutrition. They also should exercise, get plenty of rest, and see a doctor regularly. Because habitual smoking and drinking have serious effects on health, be prepared to refer the men to resources that address these problems.

Peer Support Group Closure

Purpose: To give participants an opportunity to express what they got from this peer support group. To let the facilitators summarize important points about the group's meetings. To bring closure to the group's time together.

Materials: None.

Time: 30 minutes.

Planning Note: This activity is designed for the *last* session of the peer support group. It is important to give the fathers ample time to reflect on what they got out of the sessions and how they feel about their fellow members and the end of the group meetings. If you have time, extend this activity to last longer than 30 minutes, and give awards to each participant.

This activity should accomplish four things:

- Evaluation/feedback (what members got out of the group)
- A statement or summary by the facilitator
- Celebration of the group's accomplishments
- Saying goodbye

Ending a group can often be difficult for participants as well as for the facilitator. Some people have a hard time saying goodbye, and so some participants may not show up for this last session. Others may want to linger and delay so that the group "never ends." Everyone needs an opportunity to express what the group has meant to him — and to hear what it has meant to others.

Procedure: Ask the following questions to discuss what the participants have gotten from the peer support group.

▼ Discussion Questions

1. In general, how did you feel about the peer support group?
2. What was most helpful about the group?
3. Which sessions or activities were most helpful to you? Why?
4. Which sessions or activities were least helpful to you? Why?
5. What was it like to spend so much time getting to know each other? What was it like to feel connected to and supported by other men who are noncustodial fathers?
6. What did you learn about yourself from the group sessions?
7. What did you learn about your partners?
8. What did you learn about your children?
9. What did you learn about each other?
10. If you ever have another opportunity to attend a men's group or a father's group, will you attend? Why, or why not?

Go around the room, and ask each man to comment on one or two things that he learned about other fathers in the group. Then ask how he will remember the group in general.

If possible, end the group with some form of celebration to mark the time that you have spent together and all that you have shared and learned from each other.

As the facilitator, be sure to connect with and thank each man who attended the group. As you do this, mention something that you came to value about each individual.

Finally, encourage the men to continue to reach out to each other for support, advice, companionship, and friendship. Thank all the members for all that they have given to the group and to each other.