

# Be a Nutritionist!

**Estimated Time: 60 minutes (over the course of a grocery shopping period)**

## SUMMARY

A nutritional counselor works with clients to achieve specific wellness goals. The overall foods we eat, our “diet”, greatly influences our physical and mental well-being. A balanced, nutrient-rich diet is a preventative form of medicine and nutritionists play a critical role in improving an individual’s health. Nutritionists study the chemical and biological properties of foods to understand how they react in our body. Using this knowledge, nutritionists can help clients create a diet plan for the foods an individual eats throughout the day.

## WHAT YOU’LL LEARN

- The nutritional value of pigmented fruits and vegetables.
- Qualitative data collection and experimental design of social experiment (taste test).
- How to create a realistic meal plan that incorporates family favorites and nutrition.
- Meal planning factors that nutritionists make for those with food sensitivities including allergies.

Materials Used	Resources Used
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing and coloring materials</li> <li>• Paper or journal to organize learning</li> <li>• Data table to record family’s food preferences</li> <li>• A trip to the local farmer’s market, garden, or grocery store</li> <li>• Fruits and vegetables of various colors, chopped into similar sized pieces</li> <li>• Drinking water for participants</li> <li>• Optional: Meal planning template (attached below)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">What Color is Your Food?</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">"A day in the life of a Nutritionist"</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">"I Wanna be a Nutritionist"</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Plan Your Weekly Meals</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Eat a Rainbow</a></li> </ul>

## WHAT TO DO

1. Begin a conversation with students about nutrition. It is important to instill food education from an early age and these conversations can include learning how to cook, food traditions, food sensitivities, ways to eat healthier, and goals surrounding diet (drink less soda, add one or two more servings of fruits/vegetables per week, try new foods each week, etc.)
2. Before making a trip to check out some vegetables, develop a way to talk about the nutritional value of pigments in fruits and vegetables. The infographic found from the Whole Food Kid’s article [“Eat a Rainbow”](#) can be a useful conversation starter to discuss

why our food has colors, identifying special nutrients associated with those colors, and the benefits of eating varied colors.

3. Have the students create their own infographic about the rainbow of fruits and vegetables. Include drawings, facts, and ideas for incorporating the rainbow into the diet. This customized graphic can be a useful tool throughout the seasons as grocery lists must change to purchase high-quality products.
4. When the family is ready for a grocery trip, identify foods you would like to try based on the colorful varieties you just discussed. Include foods you've never tried before, foods that are in season, and family favorites; the goal is variety!
5. Based on the grocery list prepared by you and the students, purchase the fruits and vegetables of choice. These will now be used for a taste test whenever the family is ready!
6. To prepare for the taste test, set out equally sized pieces from across the rainbow of foods. Have the students prepare a method for collecting family preferences (will they ask questions about flavor, texture, use a Likert scale, etc.?). Everyone can participate while also recording their opinions on the various foods. Ensure everyone drinks water between samples to cleanse the palate and distinguish the flavors of each food.
7. Consider the data collected. What are the family favorites? What foods might not be so great on their own, but could be greatly improved by seasoning or a particular cooking method? Discuss this information with the family. These preferences can help create lasting meal plan ideas.
8. Optional: use the taste test results to create weekly meal plans a part of the routine. Find recipes that help incorporate the foods the family really enjoyed and the ones that need a little help to taste great.

## TIPS

- There are many local opportunities to explore new foods. A friend's garden, a farmer's market, or a food co-op can provide unique foods while in season for relatively similar prices to the grocery store. These options both support local business and reduce the carbon footprint of foods. Nutritionists will often prioritize affordability and accessibility in addition to specific health goals.
- Many individuals suffer from food sensitivities ranging from mild and uncomfortable to severe and life-threatening. These include immune system-generated responses to foods, or allergies, and digestive system-generated responses to compounds in food, or intolerances. For instance, a peanut allergy occurs because an individual's immune system wrongly rejects the food; allergies can occur from inhalation, ingestion, or topical (via skin) absorption depending on the severity. On the other hand, celiac disease causes the tissues of the small intestine to break down in response to the ingestion of the protein, gluten, which is found in wheat, barley, and rye (grains). Even if there are no food restrictions in your family, use this activity as an opportunity to discuss them. Nutritionists must consider client's individual needs including restrictions to create a safe and effective diet.

- In addition to sensitivities, various health conditions require nutritionists to adjust the consumption of nutrients. For instance, individuals with heart disease must limit their ingestion of cholesterol and saturated fats, which are generally found in animal products. An individual with kidney disease must limit their sodium and protein intake because the urinary system cannot process these nutrients as well. Again, use this activity as an opportunity to discuss a person's needs. Perhaps a family member or close friend must watch their intake of certain nutrients due to a health condition.
- And of course, all of these conversations can permeate throughout daily life and are not exclusive to this activity.



	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER	SNACKS
MONDAY				
TUESDAY				
WEDNESDAY				
THURSDAY				
FRIDAY				
SATURDAY				
SUNDAY				

**WHAT'S AT HOME:**

**SHOPPING LIST:**