



# Healthy Habits Activity Guide

Looking for more ways to help young learners live their healthiest, best lives? Use the activities in this guide to boost kids' health literacy skills, get them moving, increase their knowledge of smart food choices, and help them develop healthy stress-relief habits.

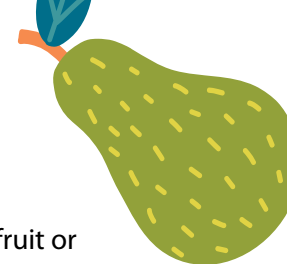
## Food Is Fuel

Help kids understand that evaluating their food choices doesn't mean lumping everything into "good" or "bad" categories, but instead being aware of what they need to fuel their body. Everything they do, from playing outside to reading a book, takes energy, and that energy comes from food!

Visit [MyPlate Kids' Place](#) to find a variety of science-based resources, reproducible activity sheets, videos, and games to help teach kids about the importance of nutrition and how to eat healthy. Share [this coloring sheet](#) of an empty plate, and ask kids to draw a meal that is colorful, healthy, and delicious.

## Building Healthy Habits

- Healthy eating is just one part of wellness. Share [Upstart's Healthy Living Tips Bookmarks and Mini Posters](#) to give kids ideas for ways to help reduce stress, get more exercise, and increase focus and energy.
- Tracking your habits is an excellent way to evaluate your current lifestyle choices, as well as introduce new healthy habits. Use the reproducible weekly habit tracker on page 4 to encourage students to participate in healthy activities and take ownership of their own wellness.



## Snack Attack

Everyone has their favorite and least favorite foods, but taste-testing things you haven't eaten before and even trying new preparations of familiar items is a great way to add more variety to your diet.

- Create a "try the rainbow" snack that includes both common and unexpected fruits and veggies.
- A fruit salad or fruit kebabs are a fun way to share a sweet treat, and both fresh and canned options will work.
- Cut up veggies to eat alone or with a dip, hummus, or peanut butter.
- Nothing in season? Grab a blender and mix a variety of frozen fruits and frozen spinach with water, milk, a milk substitute, or yogurt.

## Why Are Carrots Orange?

They contain beta carotene, a [phytonutrient](#) (chemical produced by plants) that gives carrots their color and converts into vitamin A in your body. Plants produce dozens of different phytonutrients that create a rainbow of colors and a spectrum of nutrients for humans.

- The greatest health benefits come from eating a wide range of fruits and veggies, and the easiest way to ensure you're getting that variety is to eat as many colors as you can. Share [Upstart's Eat a Rainbow Bookmarks and Poster](#) with kids to demonstrate just how many options there are! Using the list as a starting point, ask students to draw or describe a meal they could eat that would encompass as many colors as possible.



- Older children could also pick a favorite fruit or vegetable and do a short research project to answer questions about that food. For example:
  - What makes strawberries red?
  - What nutrients (vitamins, minerals, or phytonutrients) do strawberries contain?
  - How do those nutrients help fuel my body?

## What's Cookin'?

Cooking is a delicious way for kids to take ownership of their food choices and collaborate with parents or caretakers at home. [Perfect Pairs Cookmarks](#) feature recipes for simple, kid-friendly favorites with easy-to-find ingredients.

Encourage kids to make the recipes their own by planning ahead. Don't like apples? Substitute blueberries in your Fruity Flapjacks! Indulging in some I-Made Ice Cream? Throw some berries on top! Set 2 includes some blank lined bookmarks for kids to write down their own recipes.

## Mindfulness and Movement

- Children of all ages can benefit from mindfulness and meditation. Regular practice can reduce stress and anxiety, improve social-emotional intelligence, boost attention and focus, and more. Try out apps like [Smiling Mind](#); [Stop, Think & Breathe](#); or [Headspace](#), which include guided meditations created specifically for children.
- Yoga is an excellent way to combine exercise and mindfulness. There are many YouTube videos with kid-friendly routines that can be done in school, in the library, or at home. [Yoga with Adriene](#) has videos that are as short as five minutes and as long as 30.

## Keep It Moving

- Hopscotch is an interactive physical activity that kids can help create. Using chalk outdoors or tape indoors, work with kids to create a hopscotch course on the ground. Once everyone has had a chance to hop through once, you can add more difficulty to the game.
  - Do the same course on just your left leg. Then, just on your right leg.
  - Place an X on a square or two that should be skipped over.

- Add short obstacles between squares so that higher jumps are needed.
- Number the squares so that they need to be completed in a different order.
- Music is great exercise motivation for many people. What's the song your students can't stop singing right now? Listen to it as a group, and ask kids to improvise new dance moves to go with the song. Together, you can choreograph a routine that everyone can perform.

### (Screen) Time's Up!

The increasing availability of smartphones, tablets, and computers, as well as the increase in virtual and hybrid learning, means that today's kids need help from teachers, parents, and caregivers to manage and balance their screen time.

Below are some ideas for a discussion about setting screen-time boundaries and planning for tech-free time.

- Why should we set limits? Some screen time is okay, but if we spent all day looking at our phone, computer, or TV, we wouldn't have time for important things like exercising and playing. What do you think is a good amount of screen time for a school day? What about a weekend day?
- Turning off devices at meals lets you focus on eating and talking to the people around you. Stopping screens an hour before bedtime will help your brain and body sleep well. What other times can you be screen-free?
- Not all screen time is created equally. Interactive and instructional programs and games can help kids learn and develop social skills, but too much passive, poor-quality entertainment can lead to sleep, behavioral, and social problems. What types of things, like virtual school and educational games, are beneficial? What types of things do you think should be limited?
- Reading a book, coloring, and playing a sport are all good screen-free options. What other activities could you do during tech-free time?

### Sprout Interest in Agriculture

- How does food get to the grocery store shelves? Read aloud a book like *Before We Eat: From Farm to Table* by Pat Brisson (Tilbury House Publishers, 2014.) to help kids appreciate the time and people power involved in planting grain, tending animals, and shipping crates.
- If you have the time, provide hands-on opportunities for kids to grow their own vegetables or herbs. If you're short on outdoor space or warm weather, try a [Greenthumb Classroom Greenhouse](#) or [Hydroponics Lab](#). Start with something that grows to maturity in just a few weeks, such as leafy greens, radishes, and green onions.

### Food Security and Food Deserts

In 2020, [around 17 million children](#) in the United States experienced food insecurity. There are households in every community that don't have consistent access or means to acquire healthy foods. This can be a difficult topic to broach, but fortunately there are many books you can share to jump-start informative and empathetic conversations. Here are just a few to explore:

- *A Different Pond* by Bao Phi. Capstone Publishers. 2017.
- *Harlem Grown: How One Big Idea Transformed a Neighborhood* by Tony Hillery. Simon & Schuster. 2020.
- *Lulu and the Hunger Monster* by Erik Talkin. Free Spirit Publishing. 2020.
- *Maddi's Fridge* by Lois Brandt. Flashlight Press. 2014.
- *Poverty and Hunger (Children in Our World Series)* by Louise Spilsbury. B.E.S. Publishing. 2017.
- *The Lunch Thief* by Anne C. Bromley. Tilbury House Publishers. 2010.

After defining and explaining food deserts and food insecurity, discuss and ideate solutions to these problems together. Students could brainstorm creative ways to get food or grow food in food deserts. They could also plan activities that would prompt people to participate in a food drive or donate to a local food pantry.



# Healthy Habits Tracker

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Week of: \_\_\_\_\_

Living a healthy life means taking actions every day to support your body and mind. Use this tracking sheet to see how you're doing.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
How much I slept	How much I slept	How much I slept	How much I slept	How much I slept	How much I slept	How much I slept
What I ate	What I ate	What I ate	What I ate	What I ate	What I ate	What I ate
How much I drank	How much I drank	How much I drank	How much I drank	How much I drank	How much I drank	How much I drank
How I was active	How I was active	How I was active	How I was active	How I was active	How I was active	How I was active
How I felt	How I felt	How I felt	How I felt	How I felt	How I felt	How I felt