

## Teaching Children about the Food Groups: Vegetables

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend choosing a diet that is rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Vegetables can add color, variety, and nutrients to children's diets. Vegetables can also bring texture and sweetness to meals. Offer a variety of vegetables when they are in season. Offer vegetables that are familiar to children and others that may be less familiar, such as winter squash, cauliflower, and sweet potatoes.

**Consider teaching children about vegetables this month with activities, books, and discussions about vegetables you serve in childcare.**

- Teach children to identify the vegetables on their plates.
- Ask children to describe the vegetables on their plates, such as the shape, color, taste, and texture (crunchy versus smooth).
- Tell children that the nutrients found in vegetables help our bodies do the following things:
  - o Vegetables help our skin and eyes.
  - o Vegetables help keep our digestive tracts healthy.



### **Activity: Exploring Vegetables**

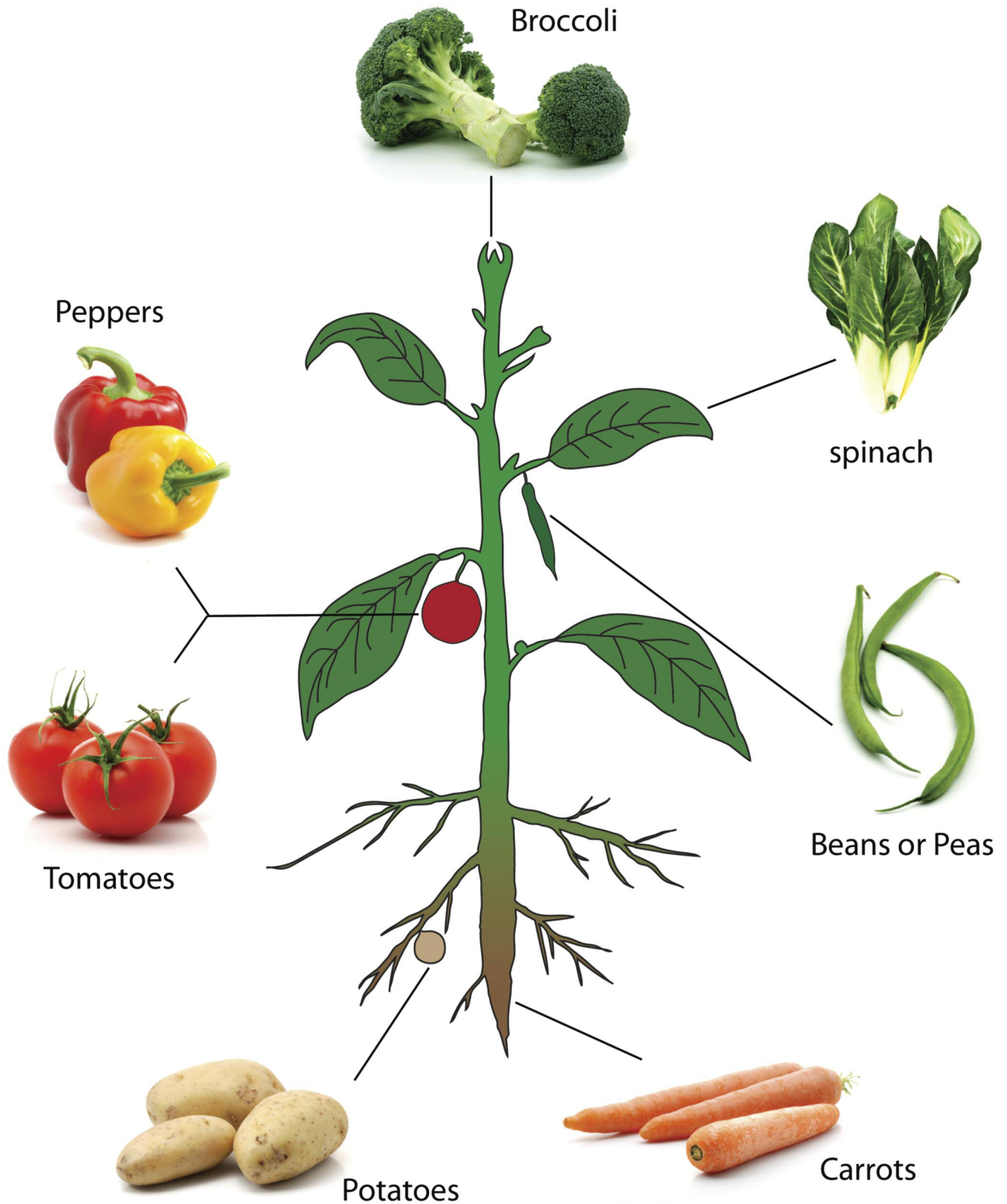
This activity can be conducted in two parts. In part 1, children will learn how vegetables grow. In part 2, children will explore the ingredients for vegetable soup.

### **Preparation**

1. Purchase one fresh piece for each vegetable ingredient in Minestrone Soup H-12<sup>1</sup> (tomato, celery, onion, cabbage, carrots, beans, and zucchini).

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2. Use a diagram of a vegetable plant below to show children parts of the plant.
3. Consider reading the book, *A Kid's Guide to How Vegetables Grow* by Patricia Ayers.



Note: This activity can also be done with actual vegetables rather than picture cards.

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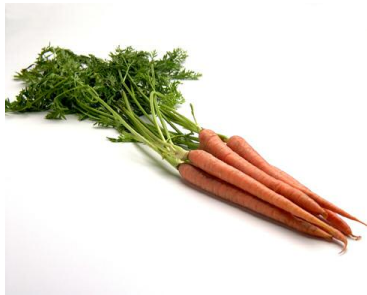
## On the day of the activity

### Part 1

Before serving vegetable soup for lunch, talk to children about how vegetables grow. Tell children that we eat different parts of vegetable plants, such as the root, stem, leaves, seeds, or flowers. Show the diagram of a vegetable plant.

Tell children that:

- Carrots are roots.
- Asparagus spears are stems.
- Lettuce is a leaf.
- Broccoli is a flower.
- Corn and green peas are seeds.
- Tomatoes are fruits.



### Part 2

1. Tell children they will be exploring vegetable ingredients for vegetable soup. Pass vegetables around. Ask children to describe each one.
  - a. What color is the vegetable?
  - b. Is it smooth or rough?
  - c. Is it crunchy when you eat it?
  - d. Does it taste sweet?



2. Talk to children about how each vegetable grows.
  - a. Tomatoes are fruits that grow on vines.
  - b. Celery is a stalk topped with leaves.
  - c. Carrots are roots that grow underground.
  - d. Onions are bulbs that grow underground.
  - e. Cabbage is a head of leaves that grows above the ground.
  - f. Zucchini grows on vines.



3. When serving vegetable soup for lunch, ask children to name the vegetables in their bowls.



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## Recipe

Try this delicious recipe for a special vegetable soup called minestrone.

### Minestrone H-12<sup>1</sup>

Water	¼ cup	Canned great northern	
Fresh onions, chopped	¼ cup 3 Tbsp	beans, drained	2 cups
OR	OR	Enriched elbow macaroni	2 ¾ oz
Dehydrated onions	¼ cup		
Fresh carrots, chopped	1 ¼ cups 1 Tbsp		
Fresh cabbage, chopped	½ cup 2 Tbsp		
Fresh celery, chopped	½ cup		
Fresh zucchini, cubed	1 ½ cups 2 Tbsp		
Beef stock, non-MSG	2 qt		
Canned tomato paste	½ cup 2 Tbsp		
Ground black or white pepper	¼ tsp		
Dried oregano	⅛ tsp		
Dried parsley	⅛ tsp		
Granulated garlic	½ tsp		
Dried marjoram (optional)	⅛ tsp		

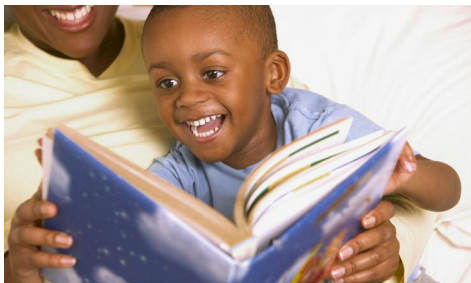


Pour water into large, heavy kettle. Add onions, carrots, cabbage, celery, and zucchini. Simmer for 15 minutes until tender. Add beef stock, tomato paste, pepper, oregano, parsley, granulated garlic, and marjoram (optional). Simmer, uncovered, for 30 minutes. Add beans and macaroni. Continue simmering for 20 minutes. Heat to 165 °F or higher for at least 15 seconds. Hold for hot service at 135 °F or higher. Portion with 4 oz ladle (½ cup).

Number of servings: 25

Serving size: ½ cup (4 oz ladle) provides ¼ cup of vegetable.

<sup>1</sup>USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at [www.nfsmi.org](http://www.nfsmi.org).



### Vegetable Book List

- *Carlos and the Squash Plant* by Jan Romero Stevens
- *The Ugly Vegetables* by Grace Lin
- *A Kid's Guide to How Vegetables Grow* by Patricia Ayers

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## Breakfast Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Cheerios® Banana slices Milk	Whole-grain English muffin with an egg Orange juice Milk	Whole-grain toast with all-fruit spread Kiwi slices Milk	Whole-grain waffle with reduced calorie syrup and margarine Apricot halves Milk	Baked Whole Wheat Doughnut A-07 <sup>1</sup> Orange sections Milk

## Lunch Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Split Pea Soup H-02 <sup>1</sup> topped with shredded mozzarella cheese Carrots and peas Fresh pear slices Corn Muffin A-02 <sup>1</sup> Milk	Roasted turkey on whole wheat bread Broccoli Cheese Soup H-05 <sup>1</sup> Apple slices Milk	Beef-Turkey Loaf D-04 <sup>1</sup> Steamed yellow squash Peach halves Milk	Spanish Quiche D-08A <sup>1</sup> Steamed broccoli Milk	Chicken pita with roasted chicken, cheddar cheese, and shredded lettuce Mixed fruit, in light syrup Milk

## Snack Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Fruit kebob with apple slices, banana slices, and cheese cubes Water <sup>3</sup>	Lowfat yogurt Diced peaches Water <sup>3</sup>	Banana half dipped in peanut butter <sup>2</sup> and sprinkled with granola Water <sup>3</sup>	Cottage cheese Pineapple tidbits Water <sup>3</sup>	Peach Muffin Squares A-16A <sup>1</sup> Milk Water <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at [www.nfsmi.org](http://www.nfsmi.org).

<sup>2</sup>Sunflower butter can be substituted for peanut butter.

<sup>3</sup>Water is suggested as a beverage for all snacks even when other beverages are offered to encourage children to drink water.

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## Sing Songs about Vegetables



(Tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star")

Carrots, Peas, and Broccoli,  
Vegetables are good for me.  
For my snack and in my lunch,  
Veggie sticks are great to munch.  
Carrots, Peas, and Broccoli,  
Vegetables are good for me.

(Tune: "Old MacDonald Had a Farm")

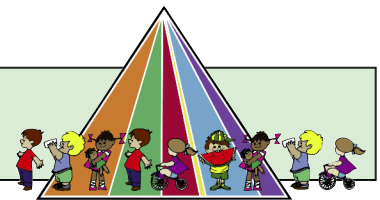
Vegetables are good for me, EE I EE I O  
And so I eat them happily, EE I EE I O  
(Ask children to take turns naming  
vegetables they like.)  
With a carrot, carrot here, and a carrot, carrot there  
Here a carrot, there a carrot  
Everywhere a carrot, carrot.  
Vegetables are good for me, EE I EE I O.



### Sources

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