Fresh Food for Everybody!

We Need Food to Survive

All human beings around the world need food to survive. Whether we are eating bananas or barley, our bodies need **nutritious,** or healthy, food in order to **function** or work properly. Healthy foods include fresh fruits like strawberries, peaches and apples; fresh vegetables like corn, carrots and cucumbers; beans like pinto beans, kidney beans and garbanzo beans; nuts like walnuts, pistachios and almonds; seeds like pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds and sesame seeds, and whole grains such as those found in whole wheat bread, oatmeal, cereal and brown rice.

At Least Five a Day!

For our bodies to grow and stay healthy, we need to get certain types of **nutrients** from our food. Nutrients are vitamins and other healthy things like calcium and fiber that can be found in foods like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Nutrients help our bodies grow strong and keep us from getting sick. Whenever we eat a meal that contains many fresh foods like fruits and vegetables, we can be sure we're getting the nutrients we need! As a matter of fact, doctors recommend that we get at least five servings of fresh fruit and vegetables a day. One serving is about half an apple or peach, half a cup of berries, a small salad, or a handful of carrot sticks. Make a list of your favorite fruits and vegetables and try to eat them daily!

Whole Food

What's the difference between corn on the cob and barbeque flavored corn chips? The corn chips are a **processed food**, while corn on the cob is a **whole food**. A whole food is as close to its natural form as possible. For instance, corn is found naturally on a cob, which is part of a corn plant. Eating corn on the cob is eating corn in its most natural, or whole form. Drying the kernels of corn and grinding them into whole cornmeal is also a whole food. Sometimes though, people remove different parts of the corn kernel to **refine**, or change, it. For example, to make corn chips the corn kernel is ground up and refined into a cornmeal that doesn't have all the fiber and vitamins of whole cornmeal. Refined foods are less healthy because many of the nutrients are removed.

Junk Food
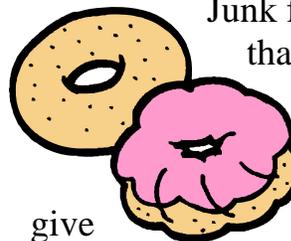
Junk food is what we call food that is so refined it becomes unhealthy to eat. Junk food also often contains harmful chemicals that give it **artificial,** or fake, flavor and fake color. Junk food typically has too much salt, sugar, and fat. Junk food does not have enough nutrients or vitamins to keep our bodies healthy. While junk food might taste good, if we eat too much of it, over time it can make our bodies sick. It can cause diseases like diabetes, heart attacks and cancer. Eating too much junk food can make our bodies too heavy or **overweight**. And, eating too much junk food can also make it hard for us to sit still in class and

pay attention to our lessons! Some junk foods include soda, chips, cheese puffs, cookies, donuts, french fries, and candy.

Where Does Food Come From?
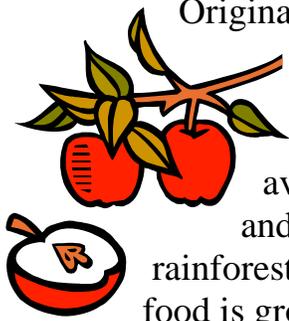
Originally, all food came from the wild. For instance, we discovered foods like corn, potatoes, avocados, mangos, cocoa and vanilla in the rainforest! Now however, most food is grown on farms and ends up in supermarkets, grocery stores, and farmers' markets. Sometimes, some of these foods can also be found in small corner stores and liquor stores. However, most foods sold in liquor stores are processed, unhealthy, junk foods that aren't fresh, whole, and nutritious.

Food Security

Although everybody has a right to healthy food, not everybody has **access to**, or a way to get, that healthy food. One example is the Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood in San Francisco, California. Many of the 33,000 residents who live there are often limited to shopping at corner stores, fast food restaurants, and liquor stores for their food needs. Because these fast food restaurants and stores don't carry fresh, healthy foods, the people that live in this neighborhood have to travel very far when they simply want a fresh apple or some real orange juice instead of orange soda. Some people have to take three buses or ride on a bus for over an hour just to get to the nearest supermarket!

When people have access to fresh, healthy foods and are able to get it easily without having to pay too much or travel too far, this is called **food security**. Simply put,

food security means that everybody, no matter where they live, has the ability to get fresh foods that are healthy and affordable.

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Fortunately, many people are starting to realize the importance of fresh foods and the right for everybody to have access to healthy food. In San Francisco, the city government is working with community groups to ask small stores in Bayview Hunters Point to carry more fresh fruits and vegetables, real juice, and other healthy foods such as beans and whole grain bread.

People in the Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood have started **community gardens,** or group gardens, where different people come together to grow fruits and vegetables they can eat or sell for others to eat. Community gardens are a great way for people to come together and use the land to grow food. People who grow their own food really understand all the work that goes into growing food for us to eat!

Farmers' Market
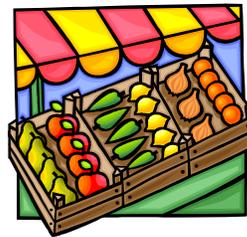
Another way to bring food security to a neighborhood is to have farmers' markets. Farmers' markets are usually held one day a week in an outdoor area. Local farmers come to sell the fresh food they have grown. Often, the food they sell was picked just the day before, making it really fresh! The fresher a food is, the more vitamins and nutrients it has. To find out where you can visit a local farmers market, do a search on the internet and find one closest to your neighborhood. San Francisco now has many farmers markets where citizens can shop for fresh food throughout the year!