Raising Healthy Children: Go, Slow, Whoa

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Have you ever wished there was a simple tool you and your children could use to make healthier food choices? Oh wait, there is! It's called Go, Slow, Whoa. This publication is designed to introduce you to the Go, Slow, Whoa concept and to help you identify what types of foods fall in each category so you can make healthier choices.

What is Go, Slow, Whoa?

Go, Slow, Whoa is a research-based tool developed by the National Institutes of Health and the Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) program to help individuals identify foods that are lower in fat and calories. Go, Slow, Whoa sorts foods into one of three groups using the colors of a stoplight to represent each group. This tool complements the moderation message of MyPyramid that encourages consumers to choose more nutrient dense foods from the base of the pyramid instead of foods from the tip. Foods grouped at the top of the pyramid contain more solid fats and added sugars, so they should be eaten less frequently. [For more information about the main messages of MyPyramid download the EDIS publication titled: The Messages of MyPyramid (FCS8904)].

Go

Foods categorized as Go are the healthiest options and should be eaten the most often. These foods have more nutrients and fiber and fewer calories compared to Slow and Whoa foods. Go foods are also in a more natural state meaning they have not undergone as much processing to add sugar and fat. Therefore, Go foods provide the least fat and sugar of the three groups. Go foods are perfect snacks and meal components for hungry families.

Slow

Slow foods are more processed than Go foods. Foods in this group also have added sugar and are higher in fat than Go foods. Slow foods should be consumed less often than Go foods because they are not as healthy. Moderation is important with Slow foods. Try to limit your intake of foods from this category to no more than a few times a week.

Whoa

Whoa foods supply calories, but only small amounts, or no vitamins and minerals. These foods should only be eaten once in a while or on special occasions. Foods characterized as Whoa are the

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highest in fat and have the most added sugar compared to Go and Slow foods. Saturated and trans fats raise the level of unhealthy cholesterol in the body and increase the risk of developing high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, or heart attack. Added sugar from preparation and processing increases the number of calories in these foods, which can lead to weight gain. For these reasons, it is important to limit Whoa foods in your diet. Substituting Whoa foods with Go foods is a smart way to help prevent weight gain and health problems.

**Don’t forget your daily needs!**

Go, Slow, Whoa is a great tool for making healthy food choices; however, don’t forget to consider your overall energy and nutrient needs for the day. You can obtain personalized recommendations for calories and recommended amounts for the MyPyramid food groups by visiting www.MyPyramid.gov.

**Go, Slow, Whoa Foods**

Listed below are just a few examples of foods that fall into each category of Go, Slow, Whoa. There are many other foods in each of these categories that are not listed. A more extensive food list can be viewed at We Can! Choosing Foods for your Family (http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/eat-right/choosing-foods.htm).

**Fruits**

Best choices include fresh, frozen, or canned fruits with no added sugar. Fruits provide antioxidants, which can help fight disease. They also contain vitamins and minerals, such as folate, potassium, vitamin C, vitamin A, and fiber.

- **GO...Eat these most:** fresh fruits, like bananas and apples
- **SLOW...Eat these sometimes:** dried fruits, like raisins
- **WHOA...Eat these on special occasions:** fruits with added sugar, such as canned fruit in heavy syrup

**Grains**

Best choices include whole grains, which have not had any part of the grain removed during processing. Whole grains contain many vitamins and minerals, including vitamin E, B vitamins, iron, magnesium, and antioxidants.

- **GO...Eat these most:** whole-grain cereals, like oatmeal
- **SLOW...Eat these sometimes:** foods like animal crackers and pancakes may not be as rich in nutrients as the choices above
- **WHOA...Eat these on special occasions:** foods with lots of added sugar, such as high-sugar cereals

**Meats and Beans**

Consume lean meats because they are lower in saturated fat and cholesterol. Foods in the meat and beans group are a great way to get important nutrients, such as iron, magnesium, and B vitamins.

- **GO...Eat these most:** lean proteins, such as chicken breast, low-fat bean dishes, or tuna packed in water
- **SLOW...Eat these sometimes:** foods like dark poultry meat or peanut butter tend to be higher in fats and cholesterol
- **WHOA...Eat these on special occasions:** hot dogs

**Dairy**

Best options include foods and beverages made with fat-free or low-fat milk. Milk helps your body take in important nutrients such as calcium, phosphorus, and vitamin D.

- **GO...Eat these most:** low-fat milk products
- **SLOW...Eat these sometimes:** items like 2% milk and frozen yogurt tend to have higher fat contents than their fat-free counterparts
- **WHOA...Eat these on special occasions:** full-fat cheeses
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Vegetables

Choose fresh, frozen, or canned veggies! Vegetables contain many vitamins and minerals, such as potassium, vitamins C and A, and fiber. Vegetables also contain antioxidants that can help your body fight disease.

• GO...Eat these most: fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables, such as steamed broccoli

• SLOW...Eat these sometimes: vegetable dishes with added fats, like mashed potatoes

• WHOA...Eat these on special occasions: fried foods low in nutrient value, like French fries

Sweets and Snacks

Common sweets and snacks fall under the WHOA category include the following:

• candy bars
• potato chips
• brownies
• sodas
• juice boxes, like 10% Fruit drinks

Summary

Making small changes is a great way to gradually improve your diet. Go, Slow, Whoa is a tool you can use to identify which foods are good choices for meals and snacks. Begin by replacing one Whoa food with a Go food each day. Continue adding Go foods into your diet and limiting Whoa foods. Remember, the goal is to eat more Go than Slow foods, and more Slow than Whoa foods, an approach that can yield positive health benefits!

Learn More

For more information about Go, Slow, Whoa, contact one of the following reliable sources in your county:

• Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Educator (look in the blue pages of your telephone book). Florida Extension offices are listed online by UF/IFAS at http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu or http://SolutionsForYourLife.com/map

• WIC nutritionist at your county Health Department (also in the blue pages of your telephone book).

For referral to a registered dietitian (RD) in your area you can call the Florida Dietetic Association at (850)386-8850 or check the yellow pages of your phone book.

Recommended Websites:


American Heart Association – This association is devoted to helping the public have healthy hearts: http://www.americanheart.org.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Fruits and Veggies Matter – This Web site provides information about fruits and vegetables, including health information and tips to include more fruits and vegetables in your diet: http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/.

Nemours Kids Health – This Web site developed by Nemours Children Hospital provides parents and children with useful information about health, nutrition, and physical activity: http://kidshealth.org/.

Whole Grains Council – This Web site developed by the Whole Grains Council provides consumers with information about whole grains. The Web site includes background on whole grains, the importance of whole grains, and resources to help consumers purchase whole grain products: http://www.wholegrainscouncil.org/.

United States Department of Agriculture – MyPyramid provides individuals with recommendations from each of the food groups and other tips to help maintain health and wellness: http://www.mypyramid.gov.
The University of Texas School of Public Health (2008). Coordinated Approach to Child Health: Go-Slow-Whoa List. At:

Archival copy: for current recommendations see http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu or your local extension office.