

## Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup> and the USDA's Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup> is an interactive healthy eating tool designed to help children increase their daily intake of fruits and vegetables, promote healthy eating habits, and encourage eating a “rainbow” fruits and vegetables in order to benefit from the unique combination of health-promoting nutrients found in each color group.

Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup> is an effective companion tool to use with the USDA's and Health and Human Services' [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (DGA) and the “[MyPlate](#)” initiative. Parents, schools, nutrition educators, social workers, child health advocates, and other professionals can use Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup> to implement the USDA's recommendations and augment related lesson plans. Our game supports their recommendations in the following ways:

1. **Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup> helps children as young as 3 years “increase vegetable and fruit intake”, a key recommendation of the *Dietary Guidelines of Americans, 2010*.** Only 25% of Americans eat the recommended daily amount of fruits and vegetables which results in a huge gap in nutrition and is especially concerning for growing children. Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup> provides a solution to this problem. When playing Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup>, children track their fruit and vegetable intake throughout the day using the magnetic game pieces. Tracking requires families to focus on this healthy eating goal and the competitive component to “win” the game highly motivates children. Children tend to eat more fruits and vegetables when they are motivated and rewarded for their healthy food choices. The reward comes from winning the game, parental/adult encouragement, and the sense of pride children feel when they accomplish a goal they set out to achieve.
2. **Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup> provides motivation at mealtime to achieve *MyPlate's* key message to “make half your plate fruits and vegetables.”** When playing Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup>, children are focused on eating fruits and vegetables, tracking their progress throughout the day, and with the added challenge to eat various colors throughout the day, they are highly motivated to select multiple fruits and vegetables at mealtimes and thus fill half their plate with fruits and vegetables.
3. **Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup> helps children achieve their recommended daily amount of fruits and vegetables.** Parents can refer to [MyPlate](#) or the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans \(page 78-79\)](#) for the exact amount of fruits and vegetables recommended for their child (based on their age, gender and activity level), and then set a specific number of Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup> bands and serving stars needed to reach their daily goal (most children fall somewhere between 4-9 servings, or 2 - 4 ½ cups.) The process of tracking fruit and vegetable consumption and the challenge to “win” the game are very motivating to children and increase the likelihood that they will reach their nutritional goal.
4. ***MyPlate* and DGA stress the importance of varying the colors of the fruits and vegetables Americans consume in order to benefit from the wide variety of health-promoting benefits found in each color - this is the main theme of Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup>.** Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup> encourages children to eat across the color spectrum by challenging them to eat at least one fruit and vegetable from each color category throughout the day.
5. **The USDA states that it's important for children to start creating healthy eating patterns when they're young. Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup> was developed with the goal of instilling healthy eating habits in children as young as 3 years.** Raise Your Rainbow is easy to play and helps children make it a daily habit to include fruits and vegetables in their diet. An excerpt from the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* echoes the importance of this goal:

Children are a particularly important focus of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* because of the growing body of evidence documenting the vital role that optimal nutrition plays throughout the lifespan... **Eating patterns established in childhood often track into later life, making early intervention on adopting healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors a priority.**

Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup> presents children with a healthy eating goal and provides the incentive to succeed. This game works because the fun, colorful game pieces attract and engage children and their desire to win and the pride they feel when they accomplish this healthy goal drives them to be successful day after day. Raise Your Rainbow<sup>®</sup> helps children increase their fruit and vegetable intake, eat fruits and vegetables from across the color spectrum, gain a better understanding of nutrition, and develop a healthy eating habit that will last a lifetime.