



# VARY YOUR VEGGIES



**Begin each nutrition education lesson with a short physical activity break from the card set provided by IDPH. Have fun and get active with your students!**

## Objectives

Learn the special characteristics of pumpkins and sweet potatoes.

Learn that a sweet potato can be eaten in similar ways to a white potato.

## Supplies Needed

November

Pick a **better snack**™ & **Act** bingo card

Large sweet potato

Large white potato

“Grow a Sweet Potato Vine” handout

## Tasting Opportunities

Featured vegetables:

Pumpkin

Sweet potato

Pumpkin and a sweet potato snacks for tasting (Optional)

## Background

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines suggest that you “Vary Your Veggies”. Eat more dark green veggies, such as broccoli, kale and other dark leafy greens; orange veggies, such as carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkins and winter squash; and beans and peas, such as pinto beans, garbanzo beans, split peas and lentils. The featured vegetables on this month’s bingo card help kids meet the recommendation of eating more orange veggies.

**Pumpkin:** The pumpkin is native to warmer parts of the United States and is an economically important member of the gourd family. Pumpkins come in many varieties, with such names as Spooktacular, Funny Face, Jumpin’ Jack, Munchkin, and Sweetie Pie. They also range in sizes from Jack-be-Little miniatures to giant Mammoth Golds that weigh in at hundreds of pounds. The current world record holder topped the scales at 1,131 pounds! The seeds from a carved jack-o’-lantern make a great snack and addition to salads, soups and casseroles. If you are interested in cooking fresh pumpkins, look for those labeled as “pie pumpkins” or “sweet pumpkins”.

**Sweet potato:** Sweet potatoes are a Native American plant that was the main source of nourishment for early homesteaders and for soldiers during the Revolutionary War. These tuberous roots are among the most nutritious foods in the vegetable kingdom. They are packed with calcium, potassium, and vitamins A and C. This is why one colonial physician called them the “vegetable indispensable.” Sweet potatoes are often confused with yams, but yams are large, starchy roots grown in Africa and Asia. Yams can grow up to 100 pounds and are not common in American supermarkets. Nutritionally, sweet potatoes greatly outweigh yams. Because of the common use of the term “yam,” it is acceptable to use this term when referring to sweet potatoes. Sweet potatoes contain an enzyme that converts most of its starches into sugars as the potato matures. This sweetness continues to increase during storage and when they are cooked.

**Web Site Resources**

[www.idph.state.ia.us/pickabetersnack](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/pickabetersnack)  
[www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org)  
[www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

**Do the Activity:  
Color Your Potato**

Hold up a large white potato, such as a Russet. Ask children to describe the various ways they and their family like to eat white potatoes. *Mashed, baked, French fries, scalloped, etc.*

Cut open the potato, what color is inside? *White*

Ask children to name another potato that has a different color inside. *Sweet potato*

Cut open the sweet potato to show the orange color inside.

Review the various ways the children liked eating white potatoes. Can they eat the sweet potato prepared in the same ways? *Yes, even fries can be made in a healthier way.*

How Many Can You Name?

What are the names of fruits and vegetables that have one color on the outside and another color on the inside? *Sweet potatoes are brown on the outside and yellow or orange on the inside.*

Sweet and Funny (learning center activity)

Have the students create funny sweet potato character with Mr. Potato Head<sup>®</sup> game pieces or construction paper.

**Talk It Over:**

Pumpkins and sweet potatoes belong to what color group?  
*Yellow/orange*

What are the different ways pumpkins and sweet potatoes are sold? *Fresh, canned*

It is important to “Vary Your Veggies.” You should try to eat more orange veggies like sweet potatoes and pumpkin.

**Apply:**

Pick a **better** snack™ reminds you that it is easy to eat vegetables as snacks.

The featured vegetables on the November cards are pumpkins and sweet potatoes. Can you think of ways to eat



**Tasting  
Opportunity**

pumpkin as snacks? Sweet potatoes?

“I tried it” stickers are available through the Pick a **better** snack™ program. Check with your site coordinator for availability. Encourage children to tell their family if they would like to eat more sweet potatoes at home.

Try one of the suggestions below for students to sample. They can then put an “X” through the bingo square of the vegetable(s) that they sampled.

What would you do (with adult help) to the featured November bingo card vegetables to get them ready to eat as a snack?

- Pumpkin seeds – **Wash. Bake. Eat. (How easy is that?)**
- Sweet Potatoes – **Wash. Cut. Bake. Eat. (How easy is that?)**

This pumpkin pudding recipe could be prepared ahead or in class and stored in a cooler. Place a small amount in a paper cup for each child to have a taste.

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 (3.4 ounce) package instant vanilla pudding mix
- 1 (12 fluid ounce) can evaporated milk (2% or skim)
- 1 (15 ounce) can 100% pure pumpkin
- 1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice

**DIRECTIONS:**

Beat pudding mix and evaporated milk according to package directions in large bowl; refrigerate for 5 minutes. Add pumpkin and pumpkin pie spice; mix well. Refrigerate for 10 minutes or until ready to serve.

**Extend the Activity****Art, Music  
& PE**

Place dried pumpkin seeds along with other seeds and beans, glue, and heavy paper at a learning center. Encourage students to create their own design or picture.

**Language Arts  
& Reading**

Place Pumpkin, Pumpkin by Jeanne Titherington (Greenwillow Books, 1986) in a learning center with the audio tape and a tape player. In this book, a child plants a pumpkin seed and after watching it grow, carves it, and saves some seeds to plant in the spring.

**Math**

Purchase pumpkins and sweet potatoes in three sizes (small, medium, and large). Help the students to compare and label the three sizes. Encourage the students to make connections to other things such as the sizes of the bears in The Three Bears or the goats in The Three Billy Goats Gruff.

**Science &  
Health**

Place a variety of pumpkins and sweet potatoes at a learning center for students to explore with their five senses (except taste). Grow your own sweet potato. Hand out "Grow a Sweet Potato Vine" worksheet.

**Social Studies**

Encourage students to ask their parents to take them to a pumpkin farm if your community has one.

# VARY YOUR VEGGIES

## Grow A Sweet Potato Vine

### You will need:

Adult supervisor, a sweet potato (some sweet potatoes have been treated to inhibit sprouting; look for one with little purple bumps on the skin or a few white roots showing), toothpicks, a quart-size glass or plastic jar with wide mouth and water.

Later you will need: a hanging pot and potting soil.

1. With the help of an adult, pierce the middle of sweet potato with 2 toothpicks, one on each side. (Make sure pointier end of potato faces down into the water.)
2. Place it in jar.
3. Add lukewarm water until it covers half the sweet potato.

4. Place jar in a warm, shady place, making sure to maintain water level.

5. Change water about once a week. In about 2 weeks you should see roots. Two weeks later you should see tiny red sprouts.

6. Move plant to a bright window. Leaves will begin to grow. When the growth is 6" high, transplant to hanging pot.

7. Fill pot with potting soil to an inch from the top. Plant sweet potato seedling in the center and gently pack soil around it. Keep plant in sunny spot and water every couple of days.



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