Class Starters & Enders

Making the Most of Instructional Time
Five Minute Lessons

Class Starters and Enders help utilize the last minutes of class when a lesson ends but there is not enough time to start another, or for an interest approach at the beginning of class. Mini-lessons correlate to GPS in the programs areas below.

Spring Fever

Program Areas: Healthcare, Family & Consumer Sciences, Agriculture

Instructions: Read the material and make notes of important points, answer the questions, and be ready to discuss this topic.

Springtime — the season of renewal when baby animals are born, when flowers begin to blossom, and when people complain about chronic **fatigue**, a weakened immune system, insomnia, and just plain feeling rotten. These are symptoms of a common ailment known as "**spring fever**." Spring fever is primarily a dietary illness caused by a **deficiency** of certain vitamins and minerals, including **vitamin C**, **vitamin B3**, and **iron**.

Historically, spring fever was much worse than it is today. Before good transportation and food storage methods, people had to rely on food either grown locally or on their own farm. During winter, when there was no food being grown, people primarily ate stored root crops such as potatoes, dry beans, and cured meats, and were unable to obtain the three key nutrients, which are mostly found in fresher vegetables and meat. Over the winter months their bodies gradually became more deficient in the vitamins from fresh fruits and vegetables.

Once a term associated with disease and fatigue, "spring fever" now refers to restlessness with wanting to get outside and enjoy the weather.

Vitamin C, or **ascorbic acid**, can be found in many fruits and vegetables, including peppers, citrus fruits, kiwis, apples, papayas, and parsley. It is the main nutrient in charge of protecting the body against viruses and bacteria. Vitamin B3, also known as **niacin**, is responsible for providing energy to the brain, and helps people concentrate. It can be found in fish, milk, fruits with pits, apples, legumes, and green, leafy vegetables. Iron is in charge of transporting oxygen to millions of cells in the body. Without iron, people can experience chronic fatigue or **anemia**. Foods high in iron include meat, legumes, shells, figs, raisins, cranberries, and fruits with pits.

There are some additional illnesses common around springtime. **Season affective disorder**, which is typically associated with **depression** that occurs due to too little light in the winter months, has a springtime counterpart correlated with too much light causing people to become irritable. **Scurvy**, also caused by a lack of vitamin C, causes a large range of symptoms and was especially common on ships in the 1600s to 1800s. The disease **hypomania**, which can cause a lack of need for sleep and fast speech, is also a springtime disease. **Measles** and **mumps**, **gout**, **dermatitis**, and **rosacea** can also occur.

Though spring fever was a problem in the past, today, however, "spring fever" is a term used to describe the feeling of restlessness people get after being cooped up inside during the winter months and is rarely associated with disease. Fresh vegetables and fruits are readily available locally and from around the world.

Review Questions

1. What is spring fever?
2. What causes spring fever?
3. What other diseases occur in springtime?
4. What foods are good sources of vitamin C, B3, and iron?
5. Who was most likely to get scurvy?
6. What are symptoms of spring fever?
7. What hormones could be responsible for springtime diseases?
8. Why are vitamin C, B3, and iron important?
9. Why were people unable to obtain these nutrients?
10. What does "spring fever" refer to today?

Language Connection

Define the following terms.

Anemia	Fatigue	Mumps	Spring Fever
Ascorbic Acid	Gout	Niacin	Vitamin B3
Deficiency	Hypomania	Rosacea	Vitamin C
Depression	Iron	Scurvy	
Dermatitis	Measles	Season Affective Disorder	

History Connection

Write a paragraph answering the following question.

What group of people were most likely to get scurvy and why?

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