

Read the Label When Choosing Snacks

Family Handout

Any time is a good time to talk about nutrition and healthy eating with your family. You can help your children learn to Read the Label so that they can make good choices when they are choosing their own snacks. Here's an activity you can do to help your kids learn how to pick a snack:

1. Ask your kid(s) to select a box or bag of cereal, chips, cookies, crackers, or pretzels from your pantry. Have them measure out how much they would usually eat for a snack into a bowl. Make sure they don't peek at the label.
2. Next, have them check the serving size on the Nutrition Facts label and measure out a serving according to the label into another bowl.
3. Together, compare the two portions. Discuss how the two amounts differ. Are they surprised to see what the serving size is for this snack?
4. Figure out the calories for the serving size they typically eat. Remind them that if they eat two servings, they are getting double the calories and nutrients!



Tasty Tips for Snacks

- Encourage your children to pay attention to servings and help them **measure out single servings** of their favorite snacks according to the serving size listed on the Nutrition Facts label. Keep them in resealable plastic bags or containers so you can quickly grab-and-go!
- **Look for healthy, filling snack choices**, such as:
 - Air-popped popcorn
 - Baked chips
 - Cheese sticks
 - Dips (such as hummus, black bean dip, and salsa)
 - Fruits and vegetables
 - Nut butters and unsalted nuts and seeds
 - Yogurt
- When checking a food's calories, keep this guide in mind:
 - 100 calories** per serving of an individual food is considered a **moderate** amount and **400 calories** or more per serving of an individual food is considered **high** in calories.

Recap Questions:

1. What did you like the best about this activity?
2. What did your child say about this activity?
3. What do you think your child learned?



Revised: October 2018



Read the Label When Packing Lunch

Family Handout

Lunchtime is a great time to Read the Label. Remind your children to look for the Nutrition Facts label on packaged foods and beverages in the school cafeteria ... and make it a family habit when packing lunches.

Challenge your children to pack a healthy 600-calorie lunch (or other calorie amount appropriate for your children) to take to school or enjoy at home. Siblings can compare their lunch choices! Remind them to tally all sandwich ingredients, including condiments.



Tips for Building Tasty, Healthful Lunches

- Sandwiches can vary in shape and size—so don't limit lunches to traditional breads. Try whole grain tortillas, pitas, and English muffins that are higher in dietary fiber, a nutrient to get more of.
- Spreads and dressings count in the overall calorie tally. Read the Label on the spreads and dressings that your family uses on sandwiches. You and your children may be in for a surprise! Try spreads lower in saturated fat, a nutrient to get less of, such as mustard or hummus instead of mayonnaise.
- Fill your sandwich with lots of tasty “extras” full of nutrients to get more of, such as leafy greens, cucumber and tomato slices, avocados, and colorful chopped red, green, and yellow peppers.
- For snacks that contain more than one serving per package, have your children measure out a single serving according to the label.
- Don't forget to Read the Label on snack bars. These lunch box additions are easy and “packable,” but many of them are more like a dessert. Look for snack bars that are closer to 100 calories per serving and are lower in nutrients to get less of, like added sugars and saturated fat.

Lunch Ingredient/Item	Calories
Total	

Recap Questions:

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3. What do you think your child learned?



Read the Label To “Shake Down” Sodium

Family Handout

Most Americans eat too much sodium. But did you know that most dietary sodium (over 70%) comes from eating packaged and prepared foods—not from salt added to food when cooking or eating?

Reducing sodium is a great goal for all family members. Lowering sodium in children’s diets can help lower blood pressure and may prevent heart disease later in life. So, remind your kids to Read the Label for sodium, especially when choosing snacks and prepared foods.

Challenge your children to find three of their favorite afterschool savory snacks in the pantry. Have them compare the %DV of sodium per serving in each one.

SODIUM TIP:

5% DV
or less
per serving
is low

20% DV
or more
per serving
is high

Rank (lowest to highest)

Snack Item	%DV per Serving of Sodium
1.	
2.	
3.	

Recap Questions:

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2. What did your child say about this activity?
3. What do you think your child learned?

Tips for Reducing Sodium Intake

- **Add flavor without adding sodium.** Try herbs and spices and no-salt seasoning blends instead of adding salt to foods when cooking, baking, and eating.
- **Watch your veggies.** Buy fresh, frozen (without sauce or seasoning), low sodium, or no-salt-added canned vegetables.
- **Rinse sodium-containing canned foods**, such as beans, tuna, and vegetables before eating.
- **Go for fresh sandwich ingredients when you can.** Choose fresh or frozen poultry, pork, and lean meats rather than canned, smoked, and processed meats (like luncheon meat, sausage, and corned beef).
- **“Unsalt” your snacks.** Choose low sodium or no-salt-added nuts, seeds, and savory snack products (such as chips, crackers, and pretzels). Or, have a carrot or celery stick instead!
- **Consider your condiments.** Try light or reduced sodium condiments, add oil and vinegar to salads rather than bottled dressings, and use only a small amount of seasoning from flavoring packets instead of the entire packet.
- **Speak up at restaurants.** When eating out, ask that your meal be prepared without salt and request that sauces and salad dressings be served “on the side,” then use less of them. You can also ask if nutrition information is available and then choose options that are lower in sodium.



Revised: October 2018



Read the Label At The Supermarket

Family Handout

One of the best ways to get kids interested in what's in their food is to let them participate in the decision-making process. Take them grocery shopping! It's a great chance for them to compare and contrast their favorite foods and "get their food facts first."

1. Take your child to the cereal aisle at your favorite supermarket.
2. Have him/her Read the Label to find a cereal that is lower in added sugars and higher in dietary fiber.

NUTRIENT TIP:

5% DV
or less
per serving
is low

20% DV
or more
per serving
is high

- a. Which cereal has the lowest %DV per serving of added sugars?
Name:
%DV per Serving:
 - b. Which cereal has the highest %DV per serving of dietary fiber?
Name:
%DV per Serving:
3. When you return home, have your child compare these products to the cereal(s) you currently have at home.
 - Lowest %DV per serving of added sugars in cereal at home:
 - Highest %DV per serving of dietary fiber in cereal at home:

Remember: don't forget to check the serving size to make an accurate comparison!

Recap Questions:

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Nutrition Facts
Read the Label

Revised: October 2018

www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation

