

Nutrition Label Reading

Create MyPlate for Teens Grades 6-8

MATERIALS NEEDED

Hummus ingredients, food processor or blender, serving utensils, label reading jeopardy game, blank nutrition facts label sheet (handout, maybe a big one to put on the board/to show the students)

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Students will learn about the importance of reading and interpreting nutrition facts labels on foods in order to make healthy choices. Students will also learn to recognize key nutrients that Americans need more of and those that most Americans need less of.

Utah Health Education Standards 2; Objective 1

1. Objective 1: Describe the components and benefits of proper nutrition.

SNAP-Ed Message

1. Choosing foods from MyPlate ensures a diet filled with a variety of health-supporting foods.
2. Identify ingredients, serving sizes, calories and nutrients contained in packaged foods.
3. Identify added sugars in foods
4. Understand and recognize labeling claims.
5. Compare nutrition content versus cost in various foods.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (not to be taught as part of the lesson)

The majority of foods we eat have a nutrition facts label, everything from staple pantry items like pasta sauce to fast foods (typically posted online). Americans eat a lot of packaged foods, especially adolescents who are spending more time away from home and independently outside of school.

Packaged or pre-prepared foods can be a valuable and convenient source of fuel, but they can also be expensive and high in calories while being low in nutritional content. Additionally, labeling claims about

the health of a food may be confusing, so understanding basic label claims is an important part of navigating their food environment. In order to support their growth and long-term health, adolescents need to be able to interpret a nutrition facts label with confidence.

We don't want the lesson to push too far into checking calories or ingredients, we want it to be about helping students make informed, but not obsessive, decisions. Reading food labels and ingredient lists is an essential skill for those with medically restricted diets due to allergies, intolerances and those who choose to avoid certain ingredients for ethical purposes.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Anchor:

Start the class by demonstrating the Create Better Health hummus recipe and walking the students through the ingredients. You could have a couple of kids help participate making the recipe.

Let them ask questions about the recipe as you go, they may be curious about tasting ingredients or why it's being added.

- After you've finished making the hummus, you can either serve it up while you discuss the next parts of the lesson (could get messy and they might be distracted) *or* tell them that the hummus will taste even better after the ingredients get to know each other while we finish the rest of the lesson :)

Discussion:

- How do you know what's in a food product if you didn't make it yourself?
- How do you know if it's healthy or maybe more of a treat?
- What do you know about nutrition labels?
- What kind of information do nutrition labels provide?

You check the nutrition facts label! (Or look online for restaurants)

Add:

We know that eating healthy is important for our health and in the future, one way we can make healthy choices is by checking the nutrition label on foods and looking for a few key things.

Handout nutrition facts label sheet for them to take notes on if they'd like, it will be helpful for them during the jeopardy game! They may already be familiar with some of this information.

Nutrients of concern:

- too much (sodium, saturated fat, added sugars)
- too little (calcium, iron for girls, vitamin d, vitamin a, potassium, fiber)

Highlight on the label: Calories, ingredient lists, serving sizes and number per package

Introduce the idea of label claims

- What are common things you see on food packages?
- Do food labels make any claims about how healthy the item is?
- How do they do that? (healthy, low sodium, fat-free, reduced sugar, good source of _____) Are these items always healthier just because of the labeling?
- What do those claims actually mean?

Apply:

The bulk of learning will occur through playing the nutrition facts jeopardy game! They will work in two teams to answer the questions. The questions in the game may spark conversations or surprise--let the students discuss and ask clarifying questions.

See jeopardy game sheet for questions and answer key.

Students can use their notes during the game to help them answer questions.

Away:

Challenge students to take a peek at the nutrition labels on foods that are labeled “healthy” or are marketed to be healthier than another food. Be sure to follow up with them about how the nutrition content lined up (or didn’t) with the claims.

HEALTHY SNACK

Hummus and veggies, whole grain crackers

SOURCES

Food and Drug Administration. (2018, June 16). *Food Labeling & Nutrition: Label Claims for Conventional Foods and Dietary Supplements*. <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-labeling-nutrition/label-claims-conventional-foods-and-dietary-supplements>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017, September 14). *Salt: Top 10 Sources of Sodium*. <https://www.cdc.gov/salt/sources.htm>