

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

GRADES 5–8

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OVERVIEW:

As a result of recent federal laws being passed, most manufactured foods are now required to carry a standard nutrition label which lists various nutrients and their amounts. However, the consumer should have a basic understanding of nutrition and how these nutrients are used by the body in order to fully utilize the labeling. In this lesson, students will have the opportunity to decide the nutritional value of two different snack foods and to examine, in detail, the new nutritional label.

ITV SERIES:

Dr. Dad's PH³ :Nutrition

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

The students will be able to:

- read a standard food label
- compare the nutritional content of various favorite snack foods
- identify the major nutrients needed by the body
- identify some personal eating habits and trends

MATERIALS:

- examples of various snack food labels brought from home
- copy of standard food label (attached)
- copy of food pyramid (attached)
- 1 set of measuring cups (1/4, 1/2, 1/3, and 1 cup)

VOCABULARY:

nutrient
nutrition

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

This activity would best be incorporated within a unit on foods and or nutrition so that the student has some working knowledge of nutrition. If this is not the case, lead the class into a discussion of the terms, “nutrients” and “nutrition.” NUTRIENTS are chemicals which our bodies need to keep us alive and healthy. NUTRITION is the science that studies how the body uses food.

Pass out copies of the food pyramid and briefly explain to the class the rationale behind the pyramid. Be sure to point out that the pyramid is a visual representation of the recommended servings that should be eaten from each group each day. The number of servings that is right for them depends upon their age, size, sex, and how active they are.

In small groups, ask students to name some of their favorite snack foods and list these on a sheet of paper. Then, as a class, ask students what the words “healthy” and “non-healthy” mean. Come to consensus upon a definition. Then, ask students in their groups to categorize the snack foods they listed into these two categories: “**Healthy**” and “**Non-Healthy.**”

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FOCUS FOR VIEWING:

Tell students that they are about to see a portion of a video which will help to answer some of their questions about snack foods and that the students in the video will be specifically comparing peanuts and marshmallows. To give students a specific responsibility while viewing, ask them to write on their paper at this time which of these two snack foods they think are the best. Tell them that they can change their answer during the video after hearing the discussion.

VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

Start the video at the beginning and **pause** after Olivia says to her Dad, "What do you think we should eat?" In order to engage students in thinking about their own eating habits, etc. ask students what they think, and to once again make a choice as to which of the two foods is the most healthy. Recognize students who want to state their choice, and have them explain why.

Resume viewing the video and **pause** after Dr. Dad says, "Yes, The nutritional act label that tells you everything that is in there....." Pass out copies of the food label found at the end of this lesson. Ask students if they have ever seen one of these before. Some students will recognize it as a food label found on packaging of manufactured foods. Give students an overview of what the label contains....serving size, quantity, and the various nutrients in order that they might better understand the labels that will be shown on the video and the discussion by the student actors.

Resume viewing the video and **stop** after Dr. Dad says, "Right! Everything in moderation!" Ask students if they agree with Dr. Dad's statement, "Everything in moderation!"

POST VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

Briefly discuss with the class what was covered in the

video and the predictions which the class had made in terms of what snack food was the best.

Refer back to the food label that was distributed earlier. Discuss with students the various nutrients listed, what is meant by a "serving size," and various listed quantities. NOTE: There has been a lot of discussion surrounding the serving size given by various manufacturers. Critics point out that some companies list unrealistically small serving sizes in order to have the amount of fat and/or calories appear small. Point out the listing of vitamins, calcium and iron, as well. Ask students why they think that calcium and iron were selected to be included in the label and not some of the other minerals.

Next, distribute examples of snack food nutrition labels which students have brought to school. Ideally, each group should have some of the same labels as well as a variety of others. You may need to make copies of selected labels to ensure that each group has at least two or three that are common to the class. Have students discuss serving sizes (show measuring cup sizes as a benchmark) of the various products as to their realistic amounts as well as the content of fat, calories and sugars. Let them decide which, in their opinion, are the "best" and "worst." Be sure that students substantiate their findings.

Have the school cafeteria supervisor, if he/she is a registered dietician, speak to your class and discuss the menu for a given day in terms of its nutritional value.

ACTION PLAN:

Assign students the following tasks: 1) Ask students to explain the food label to their entire family. 2) Keep a food diary for one full day (it can be a weekend day or regular school day) and list, as accurately as possible, the amounts of FAT consumed for that day and the total calories eaten. Point out to students that if a food label is not available for a food product, try to write down the quantity eaten and determine its food value later.

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EXTENSIONS:

HEALTH:

Determine the role of iron and calcium in the body. Identify foods which are good sources of each. Some of the more common sources are not “favorites” of young people. Have students determine ways in which they can get adequate amounts of these minerals from foods which they will consume. For example, a child may not like milk but other foods containing dairy products may be eaten as an alternative, such as pudding or yogurt.

PSYCHOLOGY/SOCIAL IMPACT:

Have students research **bulimia** and **anorexia** and report to the class on their findings.

TECHNOLOGY:

Check out the World Wide Web site for the Interna-

tional Food International Council Foundation at <http://iniciinfo.health.org>. This site has excellent information on general nutrition and many other related topics, such as effects of advertising, etc.

SOCIAL STUDIES/GEOGRAPHY:

Explore the status of **world hunger** and what constitutes **malnutrition**. Assess the status of hunger within your own community. Good resources would be various agencies such as the Chamber of Commerce, Food Bank, and Salvation Army.

MATH:

Keep a record of caloric intake over a period of a week. Graphically represent the amount of calories consumed at the 3 meals and at snack time. Compare. Determine any trends.