Grades 3 to 5 • Personal Health Series
Food Labels

You’re up with the sun and staring groggily at your box of Frosted Whatchamacallits. Your eyes land on the food label. Does 1 cup really contain 19 grams of sugar? And what are maltodextrin and sodium hexametaphosphate anyway? Nutrition Facts food labels offer lots of important information, but only if we know how to read them. The following activities will help your students learn to use food labels to make healthier food choices.

Related KidsHealth Links

Articles for Kids:

Figuring Out Food Labels
KidsHealth.org/kid/nutrition/food/labels.html

Learning About Calories
KidsHealth.org/kid/nutrition/food/calorie.html

Learning About Fats
KidsHealth.org/kid/nutrition/food/fat.html

Learning About Proteins
KidsHealth.org/kid/stay_healthy/body/protein.html

Learning About Carbohydrates
KidsHealth.org/kid/nutrition/food/carb.html

Vitamins
KidsHealth.org/kid/stay_healthy/food/vitamin.html

Minerals
KidsHealth.org/kid/stay_healthy/food/minerals.html

Discussion Questions

Note: The following questions are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

1. How many times a day do you come into contact with food labels? How often do you read them? Do your family members read them?

2. What kind of information can you get from a food label?

3. What are some of the ways food companies use words and images on packaging to catch your eye and encourage you to buy? How can a Nutrition Facts food label help you figure out what’s really inside?

4. If nutrition information were available on restaurant menus, would it affect what people order? Would it make a difference to you?
Activities for Students

Note: The following activities are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

A Tale of Two Foods

Objectives:
Students will:
• Use food labels to compare the nutrition of different foods
• Begin to understand why fresh foods are more nutritious than processed foods

Materials:
• Computer with Internet access, “A Tale of Two Foods” handout
• Pen or pencil
• Various food labels (students may use actual food packaging or research the labels online)

Class Time:
• 1 hour

Activity:
Do French fries grow out of the ground? Do fishermen catch fish sticks? In general, the fewer steps between a food’s original form and the way it appears on your plate, the better the food is likely to be for you (fresh fruits and vegetables are good examples). But a lot of food is processed. That means it went through a factory before it got to you. Foods often get an unhealthy makeover during processing and end up with added sugar, fat, salt, dyes, and preservatives. After reading the KidsHealth article “Figuring Out Food Labels,” choose two foods. [Note to instructors: Help students pick a less-processed and more-processed version of a similar food. Some examples: brown rice vs. flavored rice packets; frozen broccoli vs. canned cream of broccoli soup; rolled oats vs. packaged oatmeal cookies.] Get the Nutrition Facts food labels for each for. Then, using the “A Tale of Two Foods” worksheet, compare the nutritional information. Of the two foods, which is less processed? Which is the healthier choice?

Extensions:
1. Ask a few volunteers to read both ingredient lists aloud. How far can they get before they have trouble pronouncing the words? Explain that, generally, the longer the ingredient list and the more names you can’t pronounce, the more processed the food. Have students research some of these “mystery ingredients” and discuss their findings.

2. A strawberry is red, and so are lots of candies. Research what gives fresh fruits and veggies their vibrant colors and compare that with how candies get their color.
It All Adds Up

Objectives:
Students will:
• Observe how much sugar is in the foods they eat and practice math concepts related to sugar quantities
• Explore the health consequences of consuming too much sugar

Materials:
• 5-pound bag of sugar, teaspoons, clear plastic baggies
• Food labels (students may use actual food packaging or research the labels online)
• “It All Adds Up” handout

Class Time:
• 45 minutes

Activity:
How much sugar is in those cookies you ate after school? How about the soft drink you washed them down with? Let’s find out. Get the food labels for a favorite snack and a drink, and locate the total grams of sugar for each. Be sure to pay attention to serving size! Remember: 4 grams of sugar equals 1 teaspoon. So how many teaspoons are in each of your items? Measure the total amount of teaspoons of sugar into a baggie. Is that more or less than you thought? Discuss your findings as a class. Which snacks and drinks have the most sugar? Which have the least? Use the “It All Adds Up” handout to solve some sugar math problems.

Extensions:
1. Create a bar graph showing the class’s findings.
2. Sugar may taste good, but too much of it isn’t healthy. Write a paragraph explaining why.
3. Be a sugar detective! In an ingredient list, sugar can hide under at least 50 other names (high-fructose corn syrup, sucrose, lactose, maltose, dextrose, syrup, and cane juice, to name a few). Circle the hidden sugars on food labels.

Reproducible Materials

Handout: A Tale of Two Foods
KidsHealth.org/classroom/3to5/personal/nutrition/food_labels_handout1.pdf

Handout: It All Adds Up
KidsHealth.org/classroom/3to5/personal/nutrition/food_labels_handout2.pdf

Quiz: Food Labels
KidsHealth.org/classroom/3to5/personal/nutrition/food_labels_quiz.pdf

Answer Key: Food Labels
KidsHealth.org/classroom/3to5/personal/nutrition/food_labels_quiz_answers.pdf
# personal Health Series

## Food Labels

### A Tale of Two Foods

Instructions: Use the worksheet below to compare the nutritional information of two foods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serving Size</th>
<th>Servings Per Container</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Food 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calories</th>
<th>Sugars</th>
<th>Total Fat</th>
<th>Protein</th>
<th>Dietary Fiber</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vitamins and/or Minerals (most to least):**

1. , % Daily Value
2. , % Daily Value
3. , % Daily Value
4. , % Daily Value
5. , % Daily Value

**First 3 Ingredients:**

1. 
2. 
3. 

### Food 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calories</th>
<th>Sugars</th>
<th>Total Fat</th>
<th>Protein</th>
<th>Dietary Fiber</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vitamins and/or Minerals (most to least):**

1. , % Daily Value
2. , % Daily Value
3. , % Daily Value
4. , % Daily Value
5. , % Daily Value

**First 3 Ingredients:**

1. 
2. 
3. 

1. Which food has more calories?
2. Which has more sugar?
3. Which has more fat?
4. Which has more protein?
5. Which has more fiber?
6. Which is the healthier choice?

It All Adds Up

Instructions: Find out how much sugar is in your favorite snack and drink, and then solve the word problems below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Snack</th>
<th>Drink</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serving Size</td>
<td>Serving Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servings Per Container</td>
<td>Servings Per Container</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar (Grams) in 1 Serving</td>
<td>Sugar (Grams) in 1 Serving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How much sugar would you be eating or drinking if you:

1. Ate the entire snack and drank all of the drink?

2. Ate three servings of the snack and drank two servings of the drink?

3. Split one serving of the snack and one serving of the drink with a friend?

4. Had two servings of the snack and of the drink every day for a week?

If 1 teaspoon of sugar has 16 calories, how many calories from sugar is in your snack and in your drink?
Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question.

1. True or false: If something is listed as one of the first three ingredients on a Nutrition Facts food label, it means the food probably contains a lot of it.

2. On a food label, most nutrients are written in grams (g) or milligrams (mg). There are __________ milligrams in 1 gram.

3. True or false: Because food labels are written according to the calorie needs of adults, they are not useful to kids.

4. Sugar is a kind of:
   a. protein
   b. fat
   c. carbohydrate
   d. cholesterol

5. There are three kinds of fats typically listed on a food label: __________________________, __________________________, and __________________________.
Quiz Answer Key

1. True or false: If something is listed as one of the first three ingredients on a Nutrition Facts food label, it means the food probably contains a lot of it.

2. On a food label, most nutrients are written in grams (g) or milligrams (mg). There are ____1,000____ milligrams in 1 gram.

3. True or false: Because food labels are written according to the calorie needs of adults, they are not useful to kids.

4. Sugar is a kind of:
   a. protein
   b. fat
   c. carbohydrate
   d. cholesterol

5. There are three kinds of fats typically listed on a food label: _______saturated_______, _______unsaturated______, and _______trans fat_________.

Label the food groups on the plates below. Then, cut and paste pictures from the bottom of the page to show a well balanced menu for 1 day. Use the guidelines to make sure you don’t go over.

**Guidelines:**
- Fruits – 2 cups
- Vegetables – 2 ½ - 3 cups
- Grains – 6 – 8 ounces
- Protein – 5 ½ - 6 ½ ounces
- Dairy – 3 cups
My Plate Sample

Using the foods at the bottom of the page, cut and paste some of the foods to each plate to show a well balanced menu for one day.

Guidelines:
- Fruits – 2 cups
- Vegetables – 2 ½ - 3 cups
- Grains – 6 – 8 ounces
- Protein – 5 ½ - 6 ½ ounces
- Dairy – 3 cups
Kids need to refuel more often than at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. But many young children don’t know the difference between healthy and unhealthy snacks. Kids should know how to choose snacks wisely so they can get the energy and nutrients they need and develop good eating habits. The following discussion questions and activities will help your students make healthy snack choices.

## Related KidsHealth Links

**Articles for Kids:**

- **When Snack Attacks Strike**
  KidsHealth.org/kid/nutrition/food/snack_attack.html

- **The Food Guide Pyramid**
  KidsHealth.org/kid/stay_healthy/food/pyramid.html

- **Go, Slow, and Whoa! A Kid’s Guide to Eating Right**
  KidsHealth.org/kid/stay_healthy/food/go_slow_whoa.html

- **What Kids Say About: What They Eat**
  KidsHealth.org/kid/talk/kidssay/poll_healthy_eating.html

- **Recipes for Kids**
  KidsHealth.org/kid/recipes/index.html

## Discussion Questions

*Note: The following questions are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.*

1. How do you know if a snack is healthy?

2. What are some healthy snacks you can bring to school?

3. How many snacks should you eat in one day?

4. What times of the day are good for snacking?

5. Why aren’t potato chips and cookies healthy snacks?

6. Why is it important to have snacks?
Activities for Students

Note: The following activities are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

The Snack Shack

Objectives:
Students will:
- Identify healthy snack choices
- Create a healthy snack menu

Materials:
- “The Snack Shack” handout - one for students; one to be made in the overhead
- KidsHealth articles “When Snack Attacks Strike,” Go, Slow, and Whoa! A Kid’s Guide to Eating Right,” and “The Food Guide Pyramid” (Note: Share the articles based on your students’ reading skills. For younger kids, it may be more appropriate to have them listen to the articles or view them from an interactive whiteboard. Older kids can read printed articles with a reading buddy.)
- Chart paper and markers for brainstorming

Class Time:
90 minutes

Activity:
A new restaurant is opening in town called The Snack Shack. Our class was chosen to design The Snack Shack’s menu based on healthy foods that kids like to eat. After we learn about choosing healthy foods from the KidsHealth articles, we’ll create the menu, which has three sections: school snacks, after-school snacks, and after-dinner snacks. Most kids eat one or two snacks a day. Think about the snacks you eat at home, as well as the ones you eat in school. Choose foods that are low in sugar, low in fat, and high in fiber. These kinds of snacks keep you feeling fuller for a longer time. First, we will brainstorm a list of healthy snacks and then divide them into the three sections. Then we’ll vote on what goes on the menu. (Note: Snack suggestions include fruit, precut veggies, nuts, yogurt, popcorn, cheese, cheese sticks, cottage cheese, peanut butter crackers, fig bars, mini muffins, applesauce, low-sugar fruit cups, frozen yogurt pops, frozen fruit pops, pretzels, rice cakes, smoothies, low-fat chocolate milk, low-sugar cereals.)

Extensions:
1. Ask kids to watch commercials during one kids’ TV show to see if snacks advertised are healthy. Discuss what they saw the next day in class.
2. Share The Snack Shack menu with family members to help improve their snack choices.
Snack Buffet

Objectives:
Students will:
• Understand the importance of healthy and nutritious snacking
• Create a mural based on healthy snacks

Materials:
• Large sheet of butcher paper (about the length of a table)
• Markers, crayons, colored pencils, glue
• Magazine clippings of photographs of food, grocery store circulars
• KidsHealth articles “When Snack Attacks Strike,” “Go, Slow, and Whoa! A Kid’s Guide to Eating Right,” “Recipes for Kids”

Class Time:
1 hour

Activity:
After learning about healthy snacking from the KidsHealth articles, we’re going to create a healthy snack buffet on a large piece of paper so it looks like the real deal. You can include your favorite snacks and drinks ... as long as they’re healthy and nutritious! Using pictures of your favorite healthy snacks from magazines or newspapers, or drawing them with markers or crayons, decorate our snack buffet with at least eight different snacks and drinks. (Note: After the snack buffet mural is complete, display it in the classroom or hallway. See snack suggestions above.)

Extensions:
1. Create a class snack book. Have students write and draw their favorite healthy snacks on index cards, then punch a hole through a corner of the cards and bind them with string. The students can sign out the book and take it home to share with family members.

2. Go to “Recipes for Kids” article and select a few recipes that would be good snacks to make with the class. Share the recipes in a healthy snacking newsletter to parents. Have the students contribute to the newsletter.

Reproducible Materials

Handout: The Snack Shack
KidsHealth.org/classroom/prekto2/personal/nutrition/healthy_snacking1.pdf

Quiz: Healthy Snacking
KidsHealth.org/classroom/prekto2/personal/nutrition/healthy_snacking_quiz.pdf

Answer Key: Healthy Snacking
KidsHealth.org/classroom/prekto2/personal/nutrition/healthy_snacking_quiz_answers.pdf

KidsHealth.org is devoted to providing the latest children’s health information. The site, which is widely recommended by educators, libraries, and school associations, has received the “Teachers’ Choice Award for the Family” and the prestigious Pirelli Award for “Best Educational Media for Students.” KidsHealth comes from the nonprofit Nemours Foundation. Check out www.KidsHealth.org to see the latest additions!
The Snack Shack

Instructions: Most kids have 1 or 2 snacks a day. As chefs of The Snack Shack, you’re in charge of deciding what goes on the menu. Be creative and think of catchy names for healthy and nutritious snack foods for the restaurant. Include at least five choices for each section.
Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question (can be oral or written).

1. How many snacks should kids eat during the day and when should they eat them?

2. Why do kids get hungry between meals?

3. Name five healthy snacks kids can eat between meals:

4. True or False: Healthy snacks should be low in fat, low in sugar and high in fiber.  T  F
Quiz Answer Key

1. How many snacks should kids eat during the day and when should they eat them?
   1 or 2 when they’re hungry; mid-morning, after school, and before bedtime

2. Why do kids get hungry between meals?
   Kids use lots of energy playing and doing activities, and they have smaller stomachs than adults.

3. Name five healthy snacks kids can eat between meals:
   Any five of the following: fruit, precut veggies, nuts, yogurt, popcorn, cheese, cheese sticks, cottage cheese, peanut butter crackers, fig bars, mini muffins, applesauce, low-sugar fruit cups, frozen yogurt or fruit pops, pretzels, rice cakes, smoothies, low-fat chocolate milk, low-sugar cereals

4. True or False: Healthy snacks should be low in fat, low in sugar and high in fiber. T F
Breakfast means exactly what it says - “to break the fast” - and this meal plays a vital role in our physical and mental well-being. The following discussion questions and activities will help your students recognize the importance of the first meal of the day and identify what foods make up a great breakfast.

**Related KidsHealth Links**

**Articles for Kids:**

- **Ready, Set, Breakfast!**
  KidsHealth.org/kid/nutrition/food/breakfast.html

- **Go, Slow, and Whoa! A Kid’s Guide to Eating Right**
  KidsHealth.org/kid/stay_healthy/food/go_slow_whoa.html

- **The Food Guide Pyramid**
  KidsHealth.org/kid/nutrition/food/pyramid.html

- **Figuring Out Food Labels**
  KidsHealth.org/kid/nutrition/food/labels.html

- **What Kids Say About: What They Eat**
  KidsHealth.org/kid/talk/kidssay/poll_healthy_eating.html

- **Minerals**
  KidsHealth.org/kid/nutrition/food/minerals.html

- **Vitamins**
  KidsHealth.org/kid/nutrition/food/vitamin.html

**Discussion Questions**

*Note: The following questions are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.*

1. Why is eating breakfast so important? Do you eat breakfast? Why or why not? Do you feel or see a difference in yourself when you do or do not eat breakfast?

2. What’s the difference between breakfast, lunch, and dinner? Why is each important? Discuss your daily routine on a typical school day. When do you eat your meals? How are your activities affected by what and when you eat?

3. Whole-grain cereal, blueberries, and skim or low-fat milk make up a healthy breakfast. But what if you don’t have any blueberries? What if you eat cookies instead? Is any breakfast better than no breakfast? How can you handle breakfast when healthy choices aren’t available?
Activities for Students

Note: The following activities are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

There's No Business Like the Cereal Business!

Objectives:
Students will:
- Compare and contrast food packaging of common breakfast cereals
- Analyze media messages and the effects of advertising on their daily lives

Materials:
- One empty cereal box per student
- Construction paper
- Tape or glue
- Art supplies (paints, markers, crayons)

Class Time:
1 hour

Activity:
How often do you have cereal for breakfast? What kinds are your favorites? What do those cereal boxes look like?
Take a closer look at cereal boxes you see every day. What pictures, colors, or information do you see on the packages? What do you see or hear about a cereal that makes you want to eat it for breakfast? Cereal companies use all kinds of pictures, famous people, and even toys to get people to buy their cereal.

Pretend that you're in charge of designing a new cereal for kids, one that is not only filled with lots of vitamins and minerals but one that also tastes great and looks fun to eat. First, think about what you should name your new cereal and it should look like. For example, cereal with a name like Creepy Crawling Critters could be shaped like insects and have dried fruit “worms” in it. Cereal with an extreme sport theme could have whole-grain skateboard shapes with raisin helmets. Next, put your new cereal ideas on an actual cereal box. Glue or tape construction paper around an empty cereal box and let your imagination take over. Decorate your cereal box with its name and an image of what a typical spoonful of the cereal looks like. What colors, pictures, games, or information can you add to the package to attract kids and parents to buy your cereal? Be sure to show why your cereal is fun and tasty as well as why it’s a healthy choice for breakfast.

Extensions:
1. Take a field trip to your local store. Examine the front covers of cereal packages. Write down and keep track of what kinds of pictures, games, toys, or even candy that many cereal companies include in their packaging to make kids want to buy it. Share your findings with your class.

2. Cereal commercials often use a short song called a jingle to advertise or sell their brand. Create a breakfast jingle to sell your new cereal. Think about the kind of music, sound effects, and words you could use that would make kids want to buy your brand.
Great Beginnings Restaurant

Objectives:
Students will:
- Identify foods typically eaten for breakfast
- Plan healthy choices for breakfast

Materials:
- Old magazines and newspapers
- Great Beginnings handout (available at: KidsHealth.org/classroom/3to5/personal/nutrition/breakfast_handout1.pdf)
- Tape or glue
- Art supplies (paints, markers, crayons)

Class Time:
30 minutes

Activity:
The chef at a new restaurant, Great Beginnings, is planning the morning menu. She needs some help to put together healthy choices for breakfast. Think and talk about what you usually eat or see others eat for breakfast. Healthy breakfasts often include some of the following: fruit, milk, cheese, whole-grain cereal or bread, meat, and nuts. Design a breakfast for Great Beginnings. Cut out pictures of healthy breakfast choices found in old magazines and newspapers, and tape or glue them to the Great Beginnings handout. Use your art supplies to add your own combinations of foods and drinks. Think about creating a breakfast food never seen before, like peanut butter omelets or broccoli-stuffed pancakes. Be sure to include a variety of foods. Add a title to your breakfast and get ready for opening day at Great Beginnings!

Extensions:
1. Whether it’s rice with vegetables, beans on toast, or bread dipped in hummus, it all adds up to typical breakfast foods people enjoy around the world. Using reference materials from your library, look for foods commonly eaten in different countries. Share your findings with your class.

2. Share breakfast foods with your class. Bring in a food that you usually eat, and sample foods brought in by your friends.

Reproducible Materials

Handout: Great Beginnings
KidsHealth.org/classroom/3to5/personal/nutrition/breakfast_handout1.pdf
Great Beginnings

Instructions: Paste or draw pictures of foods and drinks that can be part of a healthy breakfast. Next to each item, explain why it's a healthy choice.