

Nutrition Facts Label Detectives

Overview: Children will learn how to read the serving size, calories, and sugar content on nutrition facts labels. They will also explore how food manufacturers market their products to children.

Subject area: Nutrition

Grade level: K-5th

Oregon Benchmarks/Common Core Standards:

Grades K-3

- Strand - PROMOTION OF HEALTHY EATING
 - Identify the food groups in the current USDA recommended guidelines.
 - Recognize the impact advertising has on food choices.

Grades 4-5

- Strand - PROMOTION OF HEALTHY EATING
 - Describe the food groups, nutrients and portion size in the USDA recommended guidelines.
 - Prepare and choose healthy snacks and meals.
 - Describe how media, cultural and family influences encourage healthy eating practices.

Objectives: Children will learn to read the nutrition facts label. They will also practice critical thinking skills to decipher how food manufacturers market their products to kids.

Prep time: None

Lesson time: 30 minutes

Materials needed:

- Poster of an enlarged nutrition facts label
<http://lpi.oregonstate.edu/sites/lpi.oregonstate.edu/files/pdf/hyp/how-to-read-food-labels.pdf>
- A variety of food packages including foods marketed toward children with bright colors and cartoon characters (e.g. cereals, cookies, fruit snacks, frozen kids meals) and packaged whole foods (e.g. brown rice, beans, nuts)

Space needed: Table and chairs or enough space for the children and staff to sit in a large circle.

Staff needed: 1 adult per every 3-4 children

Pre-test of knowledge: Who knows what a nutrition facts label is?

Presentation steps:

1. Using the nutrition facts label poster, explain the different parts of the label (focus on serving size, calories, and sugar).
2. Hand out food packages to children.
3. Ask children to locate the nutrition facts label and to raise their hands when they have found it.
4. Ask children to find the serving size information on the nutrition facts label. Ask children how many servings are in the food and what the serving size is.
5. Ask them to find the calorie information. Ask how many calories are in a serving of their food. How about in the whole package?
6. Ask children to find the sugar information on the nutrition facts label. Ask how much sugar is in a serving of their food.
7. Compare the calories and sugar content of the different food packages.
8. Now take a look at the front of the packages. Which food packages use cartoons and fun, bright colors? Compare the sugar content of these to the other food packages.
9. Have children design their own bright, fun food packaging for healthy, whole foods of their choice.