

LESSON 5:

CHOOSING HEALTHY DOESN'T HAVE TO BE HARD!

ABOUT THE LESSON

This lesson focuses on the importance of making healthy food choices. There are three Add variations in the lesson:

- ***What's in a Choice?*** addresses the concept of making healthy choices and various influences on choice
- ***Snack the Smart Way*** focuses on the prevalence of snacking and how this can be an opportunity to eat healthier
- ***Healthy Choices Away from Home*** presents options for making healthy food choices when eating out

There are also three Apply variations you can mix-and-match with any of the Add variations to create a customized lesson of your choosing.

TEACHING MESSAGES

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eat breakfast | <input type="checkbox"/> Drink water instead of sugary drinks |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eat different kinds of fruits | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eat foods from most MyPlate food groups |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eat healthy snacks | <input type="checkbox"/> Do things to be physically active |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eat different kinds of vegetables | |

LESSON MATERIALS

All Variations

- Access to equipment to show videos (computer, projector, etc.)
- Beverage containers with labels removed (or brands and Nutrition Facts covered up): spring water, sports drink, regular soda (not diet)

Apply, Variation A

- Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard
- Rainbow Fruit Kabobs recipe card
- Ingredients and equipment for Rainbow Fruit Kabobs recipe:
 - Kitchen knife
 - Cutting board
 - Prepared fruit (red, orange, yellow, green, and purple; refer to recipe card)
 - Sanitizing wipes
 - Disposable gloves
 - Napkins or paper towels
 - Paper plates

Apply, Variation B

- Snack Cards, printed in color on card stock and cut out
- After School Hummus recipe card
- Ingredients and equipment for After School Hummus recipe:
 - Garbanzo beans (15 oz.)
 - Garlic cloves (2)
 - Lemon juice
 - Ground cumin
 - Vegetable oil
 - Black pepper
 - Plain nonfat yogurt (8 oz.)
 - Baby carrots & celery
 - Measuring spoons
 - Measuring cups (1/2 cup size)
 - Medium size serving bowl
 - Food processor or blender
 - Serving spoon
 - Small paper plates
 - Napkins or paper towels
 - Sanitizing wipes
 - Disposable gloves

Apply, Variation C

- Menu Makeover scenarios and instructions document
- Yogurt Parfait recipe card
- Ingredients and equipment for Yogurt Parfait recipe:
 - Fresh fruit *or* thawed frozen fruit (4 cups), such as bananas, berries, peaches, or mango
 - Nonfat vanilla yogurt (3 cups)
 - Granola (1 ½ cups)
 - Plastic spoons
 - Disposable drinking cups (3 oz. size)
 - Napkins or paper towels
 - Sanitizing wipes
 - Disposable gloves

LESSON PREPARATION

Anchor, All Variations

- Day of the lesson:
 - Set the three drink bottles on a table in the front of the room.

Apply, Variation A

- Prior to the lesson:
 - Wash and cut all fruit for the fruit kabobs. Assemble the kabobs according to the recipe. Store in gallon-size plastic storage bags in the refrigerator.
- Day of the lesson:
 - Pull up an Internet browser to play the Smarter Lunchrooms video.

Apply, Variation B

- Prior to the lesson:
 - Prep food for the hummus recipe.
 - Drain and rinse the garbanzo beans. Using a cutting board and sharp knife, mince 2 garlic cloves. Add to the beans. Store in a plastic storage bag in the refrigerator.
 - Cut celery into thirds, then halve each one. Store sliced celery in a plastic storage bag in the refrigerator.
 - Assemble up to five envelopes with the Snack Cards.
- Day of the lesson:
 - Set up a table with the ingredients for the After School Hummus. Wipe down all surfaces with sanitizing wipes. Set out disposable gloves. Set out ingredients and measuring equipment for the hummus.

Apply, Variation C

- Prior to the lesson:
 - Prepare the fruit for the parfait. If using fresh fruit, wash and slice the fruit. Store in plastic storage bags in the refrigerator. If using frozen fruit, be sure to thaw the fruit completely in the refrigerator.
- Day of the lesson:
 - Draw two tables on the board as indicated in the Menu Makeover document. Label the first one "Original Menu" and the second one "Menu Makeover."
 - Pull up an Internet browser to access the restaurant websites.
 - Set up a table with the ingredients for the yogurt parfaits. Wipe down all surfaces with sanitizing wipes. Set out hand sanitizer and disposable gloves. Set out the ingredients and equipment for assembling the parfaits.

TRANSITION

Last time we met, we talked about Who would like to share about...?

Today, we'll be talking about healthy food choices. On any given day, teens make up to 200 decisions about food. Many of these decisions aren't even "on our radar," meaning that we aren't even aware we're making that decision. Many things influence what we choose to eat, such as biology, environment, and social cues. Sometimes it seems like the cards are stacked against us when it comes to making healthy food choices. However, with a little knowledge,

some motivation, and good old-fashioned creativity, you'll see that making a good choice is not that hard, and it can be quite rewarding!

ANCHOR

Up at the front of the room, I have three different drinks. *[Hold up the bottle of water.]* How many of you would choose the bottled water? *[Allow participants to raise their hands.]* For those of you who raised your hands, why would you choose this one? *[Hold up the next bottle, the sports drink.]* How many of you would choose the sports drink? *[Allow participants to raise their hands.]* What influenced your choice? *[Hold up the bottle of soda.]* And how many of you would choose the bottle of soda? *[Allow for a show of hands.]* What kinds of things were you thinking about when you made your choice? If you were trying to watch how much sugar you get each day, would this affect which drink you chose? Why or why not? What if I said the water was free, but the other two drinks each cost \$2. Would this affect your choice?

ADD

Variation A – What's in a Choice?

As teens, you are different from adults when it comes to how you behave, problem-solve, and make decisions. This is because your brains are still going through a lot of rapid changes and development. Actions and decisions are primarily guided by emotion and less by logic and thought. As such, teens are less likely to think before taking action, consider potential consequences of their decisions, or even change behaviors that may be risky. All this aside, though, teens can certainly make good choices – especially when it comes to what to eat and drink.

Recent research has shown that, in an average day, a person will make nearly 200 decisions about what they eat. For the majority of these decisions, we are not even aware we are making them. A lot of factors affect our choices, such as our physical environment, whether or not we're feeling stressed, and who we hang out with. How do you think your **environment** can influence your food choices? *[Allow for a few responses.]* One study showed that when cafeteria staff put white milk in front of chocolate milk, students were more likely to choose the white milk. Similarly, when baskets of fruit were placed within easy reach, students more often chose fresh fruit with their lunch. Certain foods can act like "trigger" foods that can influence other food selections you make – without you even being aware that this is happening.

Convenience is another big influencer of food choices. Simply put, if a food is convenient, you're more likely to choose it – even if that food is a healthy one. What are some examples of a healthy food that would also be easy to make or grab on the run? *[Allow for a few responses.]*

Emotions can have a huge impact on food and drink choices. If you're feeling happy and positive, you're more likely to choose healthy foods; on the other hand, if you're feeling blue or

have had a bad day, junk food becomes much more appealing. Indeed, one study showed that watching a sad movie resulted in higher amounts of popcorn being consumed versus when a happy movie was viewed. Feeling stressed out? You're more likely to order junk food at a restaurant. How have you noticed when your mood affects what you eat? *[Allow for a few responses.]*

Finally, what your **friends** eat affects what you also eat – especially your best friend. Research has consistently shown that among teens, friends' unhealthy food choices are associated with a person's individual food choices – and this was more so with boys than girls. Who would like to share an example of a time when you ordered something based on what your friends ordered? *[Allow for a few responses.]*

Because teens experience rapid brain development, they require good nutrition through a balanced diet. The type of food, how much you eat, and when you eat it all play a part in brain development, such as memory, attention, and ability to focus.

Being aware of what drives your food choices can help you make more balanced selections. Use nutrition labels or menu information to make food choices whenever possible. Instead of fries with your pizza, balance it out with a piece of fresh fruit or carrots and dip. Or instead of downing a 20-ounce soda, go for ice water or unsweetened tea. Craving dessert? Share it with your friends instead of ordering your own. Remember, the food choices you make as a teen not only impact your health now – fuel for growth, brain development, and energy – but they also add up over the years and contribute to the health you'll have as an adult.



[If time permits, show the following video clip to the participants. Ask them if they relate to the sentiments expressed in the video.]

The Science of Healthy Eating (2 minutes): <https://youtu.be/VEKba1nhsB0>

Variation B – Snack the Smart Way

Here are some interesting snack statistics: In the US, teens eat an average of 3.8 snacks per day. This works out to more than 1,000 snack-type convenience foods per person each year. These snacks are typically in the form of high-fat, high-sodium, high-sugar foods – in other words, energy-dense foods. These snack foods also tend to be low in nutrients a teen's growing body needs for healthy development.

If you were to look up the definition of the word "snack," you'd get a lot of different results. For example, Merriam-Webster defines a snack as "a light meal; food eaten between regular meals." Dictionary.com says a snack is "a small portion of food or drink or a light meal, especially one eaten between regular meals." Collins English Dictionary says a snack is "a simple meal that is quick to cook and to eat." Vocabulary.com defines a snack as "a small serving of food between meals." These definitions are vague and subjective in meaning. For instance, what is considered "small," "light," or "simple?" Nutritionists often recommend that snacks be around 200 calories (depending on your total calorie needs) and include at least two food groups.

What are some of your favorite snack foods? *[Allow for a few responses.]* What do you like about them? *[Allow for a few responses.]* According to one survey, the top five snack categories include fresh fruit, chocolate, potato chips, cookies, and yogurt. Among teens, gm, fruit, chips, chocolate or candy, and granola bars were in the top five. When asked what drives their snack choices, teens reported reasons like:

- It tastes good
- I'm craving it
- It's my favorite food
- It's simple/easy

When you consider these reasons – and when you think about your own reasons for choosing certain snack foods – you might notice that they are driven mainly by emotion. This is due to the fact that teens tend to make more decisions based on emotion, rather than logic.

Something to be aware of is that increasingly, snack-type convenience foods are not being limited to a light, between-meal eating experience. The line between regular meals and snacking is blurring. This is partly because people are eating snack foods as part of their main meals (think, eating a bag of chips with your lunch). But another reason is because people are eating more snacks, more often. Some fast-food restaurants are pushing items like chicken wraps, hamburger sliders, or tacos as “snacks,” but when you look at how many calories are in these foods, they can easily add up to what you'd eat in an entire meal. Who can think of other examples of things they've seen that encourage excessive snacking? *[Allow for a few responses.]*

The media isn't helping, either. If you're like the average teen, you probably watch 17 hours per week of television. (This isn't including what you might watch on your phone or other hand-held device.) And your favorite shows are encouraging you to eat unhealthy snack foods through the characters' actions. This “normalizes” excessive snacking and other unhealthy eating choices. Couple that with all the advertisements showcasing things like energy drinks, fast food, sugary cereals, and candy – all aimed at young people – and there are a lot of messages being directed at you that encourage unhealthy snacking. Who can think of an example of an advertisement or television show where healthy snacks are presented? *[Allow for a few responses.]* It's not very easy because there aren't many examples.

So how do you navigate the advertisements, media, emotions, and other influences in order to choose a smarter snack? For starters, think about what you like, and then think about one way you could make it more nutritious. When grocery shopping, request easy-but-healthy foods like fresh fruit, baby carrots, string cheese, whole-grain crackers, nut butters, or yogurt. That way, you have easier access to foods that will fuel growth and stave off hunger. Another important skill to learn is reading the Nutrition Facts label. Knowing what to look for – nutrients like calcium, iron, fiber, potassium, and various vitamins – and what to avoid – fat, sodium, sugars (especially added sugars) can guide you toward making better choices. What other ideas do you have? *[Allow for a few responses.]*



[If time permits, show one of the following video clips to the participants. Ask them if they relate to the sentiments expressed in the video.]

Snack Food Swap (1 minute): <https://youtu.be/6oQFWCDI4EM>

*Healthy Versions of Unhealthy Snacks (3 ½ minutes): https://youtu.be/Z2U_cM0_7cA
(appropriate for older students)*

Variation C – Healthy Eating Away from Home

When you think of the phrase “eating out,” what comes to mind? *[Allow for a few responses.]*
Most of us think of “eating out” as having a meal in a restaurant. In fact, any food you eat away from home is considered “eating out.” That includes eating a large tub of popcorn at the movies, grabbing a snack from the convenience store down the street, having a hot dog from the school concession stand during a football game, or bringing take-out pizza home for dinner.

Here are some fast food facts. Americans spend \$100 billion on fast food every year. Who can write this number out? *[Ask for a volunteer to write the number on the board or flip chart paper. It should be \$1,000,000,000.]* In the US, 1 in 3 children and teens eat fast food on a given day. Specifically, teens (age 12-19) eat almost 17% of their daily calories from fast food. The average teen has about 5-6 fast food restaurants within one mile of their home. This may not seem problematic, but consider this: how often a person eats fast food is related to the number of nearby fast food restaurants. The more nearby restaurants available, the more often a person will eat fast food. While some fast food restaurants do offer nutritious choices, the options are limited and tend to cost more than the less-nutritious menu items. And since teens often don’t have a lot of money, they tend to buy what is cheap.

Fast food eaten every once in a while is perfectly fine. It only becomes problematic when it’s a regular part of your diet. Fast food tends to be high in sugar, salt, and fat, as well as refined carbohydrates (like white bread). The excess salt causes bloating, puffiness, and can make your blood pressure go up. Sugar and refined grains can cause your blood sugar levels to spike, which puts extra stress on your pancreas because it has to crank out insulin to counteract the blood sugar. The fat found in fast foods is mostly saturated fat or *trans*- fat, both of which can harm your heart, cause fatty liver disease, and lead to obesity. Plus, there’s the whole issue of calories. Simply put, fast food meals tend to be energy-dense, meaning they have a lot of calories. Eating too many calories leads to weight gain, which sets the stage for obesity and other chronic health problems.

But we all like to eat out, and fast food restaurants aren’t going away anytime soon. Therefore, learning how to make better choices when you do visit these places will help you stay healthy and cut back on unwanted calories, fat, sodium, and sugar. There are several things you can do to improve the health of a fast food meal.

- For starters, say no to sauces. If you skipped the mayo on your chicken sandwich and reduced the amount of ketchup to one packet instead of three, you’d save 140 calories – that’s the amount in a 12-ounce regular soda.
- Give your sandwich a makeover. Skipping the processed cheese that fast food restaurants slap on their sandwiches will save another 100 calories, 470 mg of sodium,

and 5 grams of saturated fat. While cheese does provide important calcium, you're better off drinking an extra glass of milk at home. Dress up your burger with lettuce and extra tomato for flavor without fat instead.

- Order smaller portion sizes of less healthy foods, or split standard sizes with your friends. This way you can still indulge, but you'll be managing your calories and limiting intake of unhealthy fat, sodium, and sugar.
- Switch your drink choice. Of course, water is always a great choice – it's refreshing and free! Add a lemon juice packet and a sugar packet and make your own "lemonade." If you really want a soda, go for a 12-ounce size instead of a larger cup to save on calories and sugar.

What are some things you've done to make healthier choices when you eat out? *[Allow for a few responses.]*



[If time permits, show the following video clip to the participants. Ask them if they relate to the sentiments expressed in the video.]

Get Wise to Portion Size (3 minutes): <https://youtu.be/kV8Hh8Ujlj8>

APPLY

Variation A – Smarter Lunchrooms

As students, you eat a lot of food at school. Ninety percent of students eat school lunch, 40% eat snacks, and 20% eat school breakfast. The National School Lunch Program has certain requirements that schools must meet with the food they serve. However, there is a lot of 'wiggle room' within those requirements, and the food choices vary greatly from school to school. Many factors play into what a teen might choose for lunch, including peer influence, how they're feeling that day, and what looks good. The environment itself – how the foods in a school's cafeteria are arranged, for example – can also be a huge influence on choice.

Let's watch a brief video about how a research team from Cornell University made some minor changes to the layout of the cafeteria line and the results from this experiment. This was part of an initiative called "The Smarter Lunchroom Movement." How many of you have heard of that before? *[Ask for a show of hands.]*

As you watch this video, think about things you see that you think would be good to do at your school.



[Show the following video clip to the participants.]

Smarter Lunchroom Makeover – MTV Style (2 ½ minutes):
<https://youtu.be/BKff5QiTqqg>

[Pass out a copy of the Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard Summary to each participant.]

Now think about the cafeteria at your school. What's the first thing you notice when you walk into the cafeteria? Write this down in the first box on the scorecard.

What do you think your school cafeteria does well? Write this down in the second box.

What are some ideas you have that could improve the healthiness of the school cafeteria? Write this down in the third box. If you have ideas for "next steps," you can jot them down in the last box.

Who wants to share what they wrote down? *[Allow for a few responses.]*

If anyone wants to share their ideas with the school food service staff, I can collect your scorecards and pass them along. This is optional; you don't have to share if you prefer not to.

One thing we saw in the video was that making fruit attractive led to increased selection. I've made some fruit kabobs with yogurt dip that would be a good way to encourage teens to eat more fruit. These are easy to make and you can customize them by using whatever type of fruit you like best. *[Invite participants to sample the fruit kabobs and yogurt.]*

Variation B – Build a Better Snack

Some researchers recently studied how teens consider whether a snack is healthy or not. Things like whether a food is deemed "natural" and a teen's prior knowledge about what's in their food were found to be the biggest influencers. Teens in the study almost never used the nutrition labels, however. This is interesting because a lot of good information can be found on the food label.

Today we're going to look at 10 different snack foods. I'm going to count you off into small groups. Each group will sort the 10 snack foods from the healthiest to the least healthy. Talk about the foods with the people in your group. The order you put the snacks in should be the entire group's opinion.

[Allow 10 minutes for the groups to complete the sorting task. When it is complete, instruct the participants to return their attention back to the full group.]

Now let's see how the groups compared. Group 1, please list the order of the snack foods from the healthiest choice to the least healthy choice. *[Invite one person from Group 1 to write their group's order on the board. Repeat this for all of the groups.]*

This is very interesting. What are some things you notice that all groups did consistently? *[Allow for a few responses.]* What are some differences you notice among the groups? *[Allow for participants who have not yet answered to respond.]* What do you think this means when it comes to determining whether or not a snack is healthy? It's not always easy, is it? And what criteria people use to determine if a snack is healthy or not can depend a lot upon a particular individual. For instance, someone watching their fat intake might rate salted pretzels as being healthier than peanut butter crackers.

The important thing to take away from this exercise is that by putting some thought into which foods you choose to snack on, you have the opportunity to fuel your body with key nutrients and not simply empty calories. We're going to taste a super-easy hummus dip today. It only

has a few ingredients and you can make it in a blender in about five minutes. Hummus and veggies is packed with protein, vitamins, and fiber. *[Invite participants to sample the veggies and hummus snack. Pass out a recipe card to each participant.]*

Variation C – Menu Makeover!

We're going to look at a scenario that involves teens making food choices at one of three popular restaurants. First, let's choose a restaurant: McDonald's, Taco Bell, or Wendy's. *[Allow participants to choose a restaurant. Once they have chosen a venue, read the accompanying scenario from the three options.]*

I'm going to read you a short scenario about a teen making food choices at a fast food restaurant. We're going to look up the person's selections on the restaurant's website to determine how many calories, fat, sodium, and sugar is in their meal.

[Pull up the restaurant's website and find the nutrition facts area. Look up each food item in the scenario on the website and fill in the table you drew on the board.]

What do you think about the person's food selections? *[Initiate a brief discussion with the participants.]*

Now we will help the teen by offering suggestions for better selections. Let's go through the restaurant's menu and select foods that are healthier choices. *[Allow the participants to guide you through making alternative selections for each food category in the scenario.]*

Let's tally up the calories, fat, sodium, and sugar from the made-over menu. How does it compare to our person's original choices? Are the swaps we made realistic? *[Initiate a brief discussion with the participants.]*

Now we'll sample a homemade Yogurt Parfait snack similar to what you can get at a fast food restaurant. Our version uses nonfat vanilla yogurt and has no added sugar, so it's a healthy alternative that's easy to make. *[Invite a few volunteers to help assemble the yogurt parfaits. Ask anyone who volunteers to clean their hands and put on disposable gloves.]*

AWAY

We've learned about some of the things that can influence the kinds of food choices we make each day, as well as the overwhelming number of choices we make without even thinking about them. Over the next week, try to bring more awareness to the food choices you make, especially at lunchtime or when you're reaching for a snack. Pay attention to the cues around you that might be affecting your choice. Consider the nutritional implications of the choices you make and strive to make at least one healthier choice each day.

NOTES

RESOURCES

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