



KidsHealth.org/classroom

Teacher's Guide

This guide includes:

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Standards

This guide correlates with the following National Health Education Standards:

Students will:

- Comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.
- Analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.
- Demonstrate the ability to access valid information and products and services to enhance health.
- Demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.
- Demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.
- Demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting skills to enhance health.
- Demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.
- Demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.

Your state's school health policies:
nasbe.org/HealthySchools/States/State_Policy.asp

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



Name: _____

Date: _____

A Tale of Two Foods

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

Food 1 _____

Serving Size _____

Servings Per Container _____

Calories

Sugars _____ grams

Total Fat _____ grams

Protein _____ grams

Dietary Fiber _____ grams

Vitamins and/or Minerals (most to least):

_____, % Daily Value _____

First 3 Ingredients:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Food 2 _____

Serving Size _____

Servings Per Container _____

Calories

Sugars _____ grams

Total Fat _____ grams

Protein _____ grams

Dietary Fiber _____ grams

Vitamins and/or Minerals (most to least):

_____, % Daily Value _____

First 3 Ingredients:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

- Which food has more calories? _____
- Which has more sugar? _____
- Which has more fat? _____
- Which has more protein? _____
- Which has more fiber? _____
- Which is the healthier choice? _____



Name: _____

Date: _____

It All Adds Up

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

Snack _____

Serving Size _____

Servings Per Container _____

Sugar (Grams) in 1 Serving _____

Drink _____

Serving Size _____

Servings Per Container _____

Sugar (Grams) in 1 Serving _____

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?



Name: _____

Date: _____

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.