

Cafeteria Smarts

The Big Idea

As students are making purchasing/snacking decisions in the cafeteria line or after school, they may not realize that two foods that seem similar can be very different. This approachable introduction to understanding the **Nutrition Facts Label** will challenge students to explore the foods they typically choose and consider healthier options, if necessary.

Education Standards: (NHES) Health: 1.5.3, 3.5.1, 3.5.2, 5.5.3, 6.5.2, 8.5.2; (CCSS) English Language Arts: RI.4.7; (CCSS) Mathematics: 4.NBT.B.4, 4.MD.A.2

GOALS AND SKILLS

Students will...

- Analyze, compare and interpret information found on the **Nutrition Facts Label**
- Identify and choose healthy snack options

Supplies and Preparation:

- Assorted labels from packaged foods and beverages (ideally, snacks from similar categories for comparison). For example: whole and fat-free milk or dairy products; whole grain crackers and non-whole grain snack crackers; fruit in juice and fruit in syrup; water and soda; baked and fried chips. Choose some with multiple servings per container.
- Make copies of the student handout **Nutrition Facts Label** (see page 4)
- Poster board and art supplies

Background for Teacher: The **Nutrition Facts Label** is based upon a 2,000 calorie diet; individual nutrition needs may vary. All information on the **Nutrition Facts Label** is based upon one serving of the food. Key areas of the label include:

- **Serving Size:** The amount of food customarily eaten at one time. Stated in common measurements, such as cups, slices or pieces
- **Servings per Container:** The total number of servings in the entire package. It's common for one package to contain more than one serving!
- **Calories per Serving:** The total number of calories from all nutrients in one serving of the food
- **Percent DV (% DV):** Tells you how much of a specific nutrient is in one serving of a food. % DV is based on the Daily Values (DV): the levels of nutrients recommended per day for Americans four years of age and older

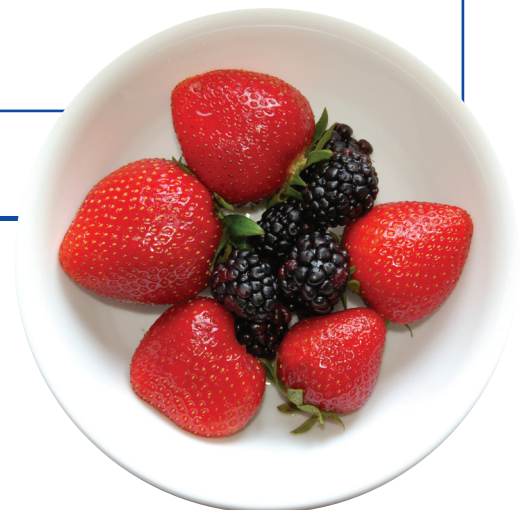
Visit USDA's www.choosemyplate.gov for background on nutrition. Check out FDA's **Nutrition Facts Label** education site at www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation.

INSTRUCTION STEPS

1. Exploratory Questions.

 Start a class discussion by asking students:

- *What kind of snacks do you eat?*
- *Who chooses snacks/foods in the cafeteria and after school?*
- *What is a healthy or "nutritious" snack?*
- *How do you know?*
- *Has anyone heard of the **Nutrition Facts Label**?*



2. Discovering the Nutrition Facts Label. Invite students to bring a favorite snack or beverage to school the next day.* Some snacks may be unpackaged (like fruit or vegetables). Have students separate and group similar snacks together (along with the ones you've supplied): fresh fruit or vegetables, crackers, chips, beverages, dairy, etc. (***Remember:** if you have students with food allergies, e.g., peanuts, remind students to avoid bringing those foods to class.)

Explain that fruits and vegetables are packed with nutrients that we can't see, but for the foods that are packaged, we can evaluate the nutritional information by looking at the **Nutrition Facts Label**. Ask students if they can find the **Nutrition Facts Label** on the foods in packages.

Tell students that when choosing their own snacks, they have the power to select those that are "nutrient-rich" and give them the "fuel" or energy they need to last throughout the day and to do their favorite activities.

Teacher Tip:

- Remind students that there isn't always an easy answer in choosing which snack seems "best" – but the nutrition label can help them compare how certain foods are similar, and how they are different.

Distribute a copy of the blank **Nutrition Facts Label** handout to each student. Have them select a snack or beverage item they brought in or eat often, then fill out the handout with the label information.

Next, have them answer the math problems and questions at the bottom of the page. Then discuss and share their observations.

3. Evaluating and Interpreting. Have students work together to study the labels of various food and beverage containers that were brought in, to identify choices that are:

- Lowest in **saturated fat** and **sodium** (ideally, 5% DV or lower)
and
- Lowest amount of sugars (shown in grams)

Next, have them look for options that are:

- Higher in **Dietary Fiber** (ideally, 20% DV or more)
and
- Have beneficial vitamins/minerals like **Vitamin C**, **Calcium** or **Iron**

To help them evaluate the nutrition of each item, have students rank the daily values of each label in a chart or graph.

4. Snack Power-Pack List! Once students have compared and chosen snacks that are lower in saturated fat, sodium and sugars, have them work in pairs or small groups to create a "**Snack Power-Pack List**": a list of go-to snacks that pack the greatest nutrient offerings.

Use the list below as an idea starter:

SNACK POWER-PACK LIST

Examples:

FRUITS	VEGETABLES	GRAINS	PROTEIN FOODS	DAIRY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bananas • Apples • Oranges • Applesauce • Fruit cup in juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini carrots • Celery • Broccoli • Tomatoes/Salsa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grain crackers • Whole grain bread • Whole grain pita 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuts • Seeds • Peanut or almond butter • Bean dip/Hummus • Canned tuna 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-fat or fat-free milk • Low-fat yogurt • Low-fat cheese • Frozen low-fat yogurt

If your school has vending machines, have students evaluate the choices offered to determine which are the healthiest choices.

Provide students with poster board and art supplies to create their **Snack Power-Pack Lists**. Have students share their lists with the rest of the class. Display the finished lists in the cafeteria, around the school, or near the vending machines as visual reminders of nutritious snacks. This will help others at school make healthy choices too.

Remind students that they have the power, and now they have the tools, to make healthy choices every day by using the **Nutrition Facts Label**.

5. Extend the Lesson. Have students examine labels on packaged foods in the vending machines and cafeteria. Ask: *Which foods would be the best snack choices, and why? How can you help other students make better choices too?*

6. Home Connection. Using the **Snack Power-Pack List**, have students create take-home versions to serve as shopping lists to share with their families. Encourage students to be involved in helping select different foods for the household by going to the grocery store with their parents and/or caregivers.

STUDENT HANDOUT: *Nutrition Facts Label*

Name: _____

Fill in the **Nutrition Facts** for your food or beverage item. Then answer the questions.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size	_____
Servings Per Container	_____
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	_____
Calories from Fat	_____
% Daily Values*	
Total Fat	_____
Saturated Fat	_____
Trans Fat	_____
Cholesterol	_____
Sodium	_____
Total Carbohydrate	_____
Dietary Fiber	_____
Sugars	_____
Protein	_____
Vitamin	_____
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.	

How many servings are there per container? _____

If you finish this container, how many*:

- Carb grams do you have left for the day? _____
- Protein grams do you have left for the day? _____
- Fat grams do you have left for the day? _____

*Hint: The total Daily Value equals 100%