

# FRESH

## FOOD RE-EDUCATION FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HEALTH



### SNACKS AND FOOD LABELS

### 2012-2013 SCHOOL YEAR

## ALL SNACKS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL

Many people are under the impression that snacking is something that should be avoided in order for children to lead a healthy lifestyle. Snack food has a bad reputation because people often choose high-calorie, low-nutrient foods to eat rather than planning ahead and stocking up on healthy snack foods. In addition, just as our meal proportions have grown, snack portions also have grown. Snacks often serve as mini-meals that replace a well-balanced meal.

The truth is that *healthy* snacking is critical to a child's growth and development, especially when his/her days are activity packed. Healthy snacks will provide your child with extra nutrition that he/she may need to play sports and stay active.

By supplying healthy snacks for your child, you can help him/her avoid choosing a less-healthy food that is likely to be high in saturated fat and sugars, such as many of the items found in vending machines or in the check-out lane at the market.

Below are some ways to incorporate healthy snacking into your child's and family's lifestyle:

**Plan ahead:** Know your child's schedule. If there is a large gap between lunch and dinner, pack a healthy snack so he/she won't choose something unhealthy from the vending machine.

**Make healthy snacks readily available:** This can be done by prepackaging them in Ziploc baggies. Store cut up fruits and vegetables in the refrigerator at your child's eye level so that they are the first and most convenient snack to grab.

**Be a good role model:** Let your eating patterns be an example for your children.

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)



## HEALTHY SNACK ALTERNATIVES

- Make your own homemade potato chips by slicing a sweet potato and baking the chips at 350° until crisp.
- Make your own vegetable roll up by cutting carrots, celery or peppers into sticks and wrapping a slice of low-fat cheese around a bundle of them.
- Make your own snack mix. Combine 1 cup of toasted oat cereal, 1/4 cup of unsalted dry roasted peanuts, 1/4 cup of raisins and 1/4 cup of dried cranberries. Toss together and enjoy!
- Make your own grapesicles! Alternate red and green grapes onto a wooden skewer. Place skewers into freezer for 30 minutes or until frozen. Serve immediately.
- Replace soda with 100% fruit or vegetable juice.



## FIGURING OUT FOOD LABELS

Food labels can be found on almost every food that is purchased in your local supermarket. They are typically found in a panel format entitled "Nutrition Facts" on the back or side of food packaging. The Nutrition Facts can be used to help you make healthy food choices. They also are helpful for people with certain medical conditions or diseases who need to make sure they are not consuming too much of a certain nutrient or ingredient.

While the Nutrition Facts are typically easy to find and easy to read, many people find them confusing and underestimate their importance. Here is a brief explanation of what some of the different categories on the label refer to and how you can use the information to meet your family's nutritional needs.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration requires food labels to contain the following: information about the percent daily value, which is based on a 2,000 calorie diet (meaning the percentage of the amount of daily recommended nutrients a product provides), calories, calories from fat, total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium, total carbohydrates, dietary fiber, sugars, protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron. Food companies are permitted to list the amounts of other vitamins and often do.

When reading a food label, you want to look for foods that are low in calories, total fat and sodium. Calories give you energy, but too many calories can equal extra pounds if they are not burned off.

Foods that have 3 grams of fat or less per serving are considered low-fat. Sodium, or salt, is found naturally in small amounts in most foods, but is also used as a preservative to keep foods fresher longer. It is recommended that a person's daily intake of sodium does not exceed 2,300 milligrams (or one teaspoon of salt).

Most of the calories we consume come from carbohydrates. Total carbohydrates include dietary fiber and sugars. Fiber is needed for digestion and can help maintain low cholesterol levels. Sugars are found in most foods, but can also be added. Many processed foods are high in added sugars and therefore contain "empty calories", meaning they have no nutritional value and should be limited.

[www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)

### Did you know...

Calories provide a measure of how much energy you get from a serving of food. Eating too many calories per day is linked to diabetes and obesity.

## HEALTHY CLAIMS ON FOOD LABELS

Here is a list of the most common claims on food labels and what they really mean according to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations:

**Calorie free:** fewer than five calories per serving

**Fat free/sugar free:** less than a 1/2 gram of fat or sugar per serving

**Low sodium:** less than 140mg of salt per serving

**Low calorie:** fewer than 40 calories per serving

**Low Cholesterol:** less than 20mg of cholesterol per serving

**Good source of \_\_\_\_\_:** provides as least 10% of the Daily Value of a particular vitamin or mineral per serving

**Light:** 1/3 fewer calories or 1/2 the fat of the regular version of the food

**Healthy:** decreased fat, saturated fat, sodium and cholesterol and at least 10% of the Daily Value of vitamins A and C, the minerals iron and calcium, and fiber.

[www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)

## PARENT ACTIVITY CORNER

- Include your children in household activities. Have your child walk the dog, wash your car or vacuum.
- Ride your bike to your local market or library. At the library choose a book on family fitness or activities for kids.
- Celebrate a birthday or anniversary with something active. Go for a hike, play a game of basketball or play tag.
- Sign your family up for a local 5K walk/run. Have a contest among the members of your family to see who can finish the walk/run the fastest.
- Sign your child up at a local after school program or take lessons in a sport or activity they enjoy.
- For more healthy information visit:

[www.hopkinsbayview.org/  
communityrelations/fresh](http://www.hopkinsbayview.org/communityrelations/fresh)

