



The Facts are on the Label

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A great culminating activity to reinforce class lessons on how to choose a balanced diet and evaluate foods based on fat, calories, and food labels. The activity makes students apply what they are learning.

Objective: Students will be able to use the information (both the ingredient listing and Nutrition Facts Label) that is found on food packages to help them make informed eating choices.

Materials Needed:

- Collect packages of foods, food labels or pull out appropriate Dairy Council Comparison Cards for foods that kids eat.

Method:

- Arrange five stations around the room to simulate the choices kids would make in the grocery store. The station topics include breakfast foods, snacks, beverages, dairy/meats, and nutrient dense foods.
- Use food labels, food packages, and Dairy Council's Comparison Cards* as resources.
- Working in pairs or individually, students go through each station completing a nutrition worksheet. Below are some of the worksheet decisions students must make. You can add or change the questions you ask at each station depending on your students' needs.

Station 1 Breakfast: Read food labels and compare the ingredients in cereals, and pop-tarts™. Which is highest in sugar? Besides sucrose, what are some other words used for sugar? Students must explain one reason that foods in the grain group are an important part of breakfast.

Station 2 Snacks: Look at the packages for chips, wheat crackers, Ring Dings™ and fruit rolls. Which food group is each of these foods in? Rank them on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the most nutrient-packed snack. Name three healthy snacks you could eat.

Station 3 Beverages: Compare apple juice, soda, fruit punch, and milk for nutrients. What are the first three ingredients in popular sports drinks? Are they nutritious?

Station 4 Dairy/Meat: On a worksheet, students are given the amount of protein in different foods. They then must compare the remaining pairs of foods for their difference in calories and fat, and fill in these numbers on the worksheet. They compare water-packed tuna versus tuna packed in oil; frozen yogurt versus premium ice cream.

Station 5 Nutrient-Density (optional): Using Comparison Cards*, students determine how many calories are in one serving of a tossed salad. How many calories are added with two tablespoons of dressing? Students read the cards and do the math for their worksheet. How many calories and nutrients are in orange juice? Gelatin? If you made gelatin with fruit or fruit juice, how would this change the nutrients? Students look at the difference in nutrients and fat content between a baked potato and French fries. Finally, they rank different sources of meat from high to low fat.

Source: Dimensions in Nutrition Education newsletter