



## Lesson Objectives

1. To illustrate how to select healthy food based on information found on nutrition labels.
2. To apply participants' knowledge of healthy food to choosing healthy items at the store.

## Review the Last Chapter

- What is an ad?
- When you watch television, what types of food do you see advertised? What do the ads make you hungry for?
- As an Ad Detective since our last lesson, what new ads did you see?
- Describe one ad you saw. What clues did you use to evaluate the ad? What part of the ad was probably true? What part of the ad was probably intended to trick you into buying the product?



## Helpful Hints

- Additional information about current nutrition label standards from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the American Heart Association can be found on [www.NAClubs.org](http://www.NAClubs.org).
- Information on teaching youth about whole foods can be found on [www.NAClubs.org](http://www.NAClubs.org).
- It might be helpful to have a community health professional co-present the Label Detectives activity.

## Activity 1: Label Detectives

### Purpose of the Activity

- To teach participants how to read the nutrition information that is found on food labels.
- To help youth make better assessments of the nutritional value in the types of food and beverages they choose.

### Instructions

1. Explain that it's easy to tell whether you're eating healthy or unhealthy food. The companies that sell food actually have to tell you about its nutrition. They do this on the food package itself. That's the law. So any food that comes in a package will have a label that tells you about the nutrition the food contains. That's great news if you are committed to keeping your body healthy and free from type 2 diabetes.
2. Have each participant team up with a partner. Pass out the food package samples – one per partner team.
3. Together, look at the nutritional information listed on the package. *[Note: The level of detail you cover will depend on the age range of your group.]* As you go over the different sections of the label, at a minimum you should point out and discuss the following:
  - a. **Serving size** = the amount you can eat to get the nutrient quantities (calories, vitamins, etc.) listed on the package. *[Note: Be sure to emphasize this part of the label along with the next item, the number of servings per container. Youth need to understand that all the label's nutritional references are for one serving size, not for the whole package.]*
  - b. **Servings per container** = how many servings the whole package contains.
  - c. **Calories** = the measurement of fuel, or energy, stored in each serving.
  - d. **Percent daily value** (sometimes listed as % DV) = how much each serving has of that total nutrient you need each day.



### Materials needed

- Samples of canned or packaged foods with labels describing their nutritional content. Try to offer a mix of foods from the different My Native Plate categories that are healthy and less healthy. For example, choose foods that are high in fat, sugar, and calories as well as foods that are low in fat, sugar, and calories.
- Nutrition label worksheets (two different examples), which can be found on [www.NAClubs.org](http://www.NAClubs.org)



- e. **Fat** (may be broken down by different types of fat) = a nutrient that we should eat very little of each day. *[Note: Depending on the participants' learning levels, you might want to explain that 'g' stands for grams, which is one way fat is measured.]*
- f. **Carbohydrates and sugar** = carbohydrates provide our body with energy. Our bodies break down (or converts) most carbohydrates into the sugar glucose, which is absorbed into the bloodstream. Too much sugar can be harmful to our bodies.
- g. **Protein** = a very important nutrient that gives us energy and helps the body repair itself.
- h. **Vitamins** = another important nutrient category that helps with our body's growth and ability to prevent sickness..
- i. **Calcium** = a nutrient that is essential for helping bones and teeth grow and remain strong.

4. Pass out the nutrition label worksheets to each partner team.
5. Give half of the teams one of the worksheets; give the second worksheet to the other teams.
6. Have each team fill in their nutrition label worksheet.
7. Ask two volunteers, one for each worksheet, to tell the group their worksheet answers. As they do, list the answers on the board in two side-by-side columns. Then compare the two snack options from the nutrition label worksheets to decide which is healthier.
8. Suggested group discussion topics:
  - a. Which snack would be healthier to eat?
  - b. Which snack has fewer calories? Less sugar? Less fat?
  - c. Which snack would be better for preventing type 2 diabetes? Why?
9. Using the nutrition label reading skills they just learned, have each team read the nutrition label of the sample items you gave them and decide if the snack is healthy.
10. Ask a volunteer from each team to introduce their product and tell the group why the product is a healthy food choice or not.

## Activity 2: Processed Foods

### Purpose of the Activity

- To help participants recognize the difference between real, natural, whole and processed foods.
- To learn about the nutritional implications of choosing natural vs. processed foods.
- To encourage participants to look for foods with as few ingredients as possible, including things they can pronounce.



### Materials needed

- White board or butcher block paper
- Markers
- An ear of corn (or a picture of one) without any packaging
- A can of corn
- A bag of cornmeal
- A box of Cornflakes cereal
- A bag of corn chips
- A jar of corn syrup

### Instructions

1. Write the words processed food on the white board or butcher block paper. Ask the participants what the words mean. Write down their responses. *[Examples of responses may include: foods that aren't found in nature, foods that are packaged, etc.]*
2. Explain that processed food usually refers to foods that are packaged in boxes, cans, or bags. These foods need to be processed, or changed, in order for people to be able to eat them. They are foods not found in nature.
3. Ask participants for examples of processed foods. *[Examples of responses may include: cans of soup, peanut butter, macaroni and cheese, hot dogs, chips, sodas, etc.]*
4. Explain that in addition to going through many complicated processing steps, processed foods often contain additives, artificial flavors, and other chemical ingredients. You can determine whether a food is processed by looking at the ingredient list. The longer the ingredient list, the more processed a food is likely to be. Processed foods are usually found in the center aisles of the grocery store and are more likely to contain ingredients that you are not able to recognize or ingredients that you wouldn't have in your kitchen. As a general rule, processed foods are not as healthy for you as whole or natural foods, that is, foods that only have one ingredient and are found in nature. (Adapted from *Jacob, A., Processed Food Definition*, retrieved from <http://healthyeating.sfgate.com/processed-food-definition-2074.html>).
5. Divide participants into five groups; give each group one product made from corn: a can of corn, a bag of cornmeal, a box of Cornflakes cereal, a bag of corn chips, or a jar of corn syrup. Ask them to look at the ear of corn (placed near the front of the room) and guess how many different steps the ear of corn went through to make the product they have. Make sure that at least one person in each group is able to read the labels of their product.



6. Ask each group to read the ingredients and the nutritional label on their product. How many ingredients are there? Can they pronounce all of the ingredients? Can these ingredients be found at home? Is there anything in the ingredients list or on the nutritional label that makes them worried?
7. Have each group share what they learned about their product.
8. As a large group, decide which products are closer to natural food (the ear of corn) and which are more processed. Ask why they think one product is more or less processed than another and what clues they used to decide.
9. Ask the participants why they think people eat processed foods when we know they aren't healthy for us. *[Examples of responses may include: it is easier than cooking something ourselves, it is available everywhere, it costs less, ads are colorful and attractive, etc.]* Reiterate that even if processed foods are everywhere around us, whole, natural foods are healthier, and we should choose natural foods when we have a choice. They have more nutrients and fewer artificial ingredients.
10. Additional suggested group discussion topics:
  - a. Why don't fresh fruits and vegetables have nutrition labels?
  - b. What colors do natural foods come in? What colors are artificial, or colors we don't see in natural foods?
  - c. As an Ad Detective, why do you think some foods have artificial colors in them? Why are they made that way?



## Talking Circle

- What kinds of foods have nutritional labels on them?
- What do nutritional labels tell you?
- How can you tell which foods are healthier for you?
- What is processed food?
- Are foods with more ingredients usually better or worse than foods with fewer ingredients?



## Optional Activities

*Found on [www.NAClubs.org](http://www.NAClubs.org).*

- Additional activities will be posted on the T.R.A.I.L. Resource Center at [www.NAClubs.org](http://www.NAClubs.org).
- Self-Care Corner Activities 